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CALIFORNIA RURAL LAND USE

AND

MANAGEMENT

A History of the Use and Occupancy  
of Rural Lands in California

By

Wm. S. Brown

and

S. B. Show

1944

United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
California Region



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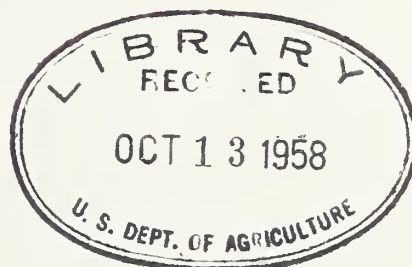
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Forest Service,  
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MATTER COVERED IN CALIFORNIA  
RURAL LAND USE HISTORY

Wm. S. Brown  
1943-44

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## PREFACE

It is often asserted that more has been written about the State of California than of any other area of similar size in the world. In spite of the many hundreds of thousands of volumes extant, month by month and year by year, books and magazine articles on California continue to roll off the Nation's presses, with little apparent diminution in the interest which the name of California invokes.

The authors of this work fully realize that only a relatively small part of the matter contained herein is making its initial bow in print, nevertheless, they have gathered and consolidated the data included from a multitude of different sources, and from the records of administration under multiple land use practices of the national forests of California through four decades.

One cannot consider the kaleidoscopic pattern of California land use throughout the years without thinking also in terms of the people using the lands so that the human element has been introduced freely in these pages, along with statistical and factual data.

The writers frankly acknowledge that they have strayed from beaten literary paths in mixing statistical and tabulative data with written narrative, but believe that this practice is fully justified in a work of this nature, rather than its being segregated as long pages of tables in one section of the book. In the length of some of the chapters they must also admit of somewhat flying in the face of literary tradition, but choose the method of time periods in presenting their subject in lieu of numerous chapters, each dealing with one phase of the diversified uses of California lands. In tracing the history of rural California land use, however, it is virtually impossible to always stick closely to dates or periods since some classes of development or use spring into full being almost overnight while others come gradually through periods of years, and sometimes through generations of use and growth.

The question might justifiably be asked why officers of the Forest Service, engaged primarily in the protection and administration of forest lands, should compile a history of general land use. This question pretty well answers itself in face of the fact that the United States Forest Service is engaged in locally administering as servants of the people approximately one-fifth of the area of the State,



representing that embraced in the public lands included within the national forests. By virtue of legal arrangements with owners, the organization is also responsible for protection or some form of administration of around five million acres of additional contiguous lands. Moreover, the close relationship of forest and wild land to other types and classes of land, particularly in California, where wild land comprises some three-fourths of the total area of the State, is a factor well known.

To list in detail the many individuals and agencies who have contributed to the data embodied in this work would require altogether too much space. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Dr. Donald McKenzie Brown and his staff of the Santa Barbara Public Library; to Miss Signe R. Otterson, Department of Agriculture Librarian of San Francisco, and her staff; to Miss Orpha Cummings, Giannini Hall Library, University of California; to Miss Margaret C. Irwin, Librarian and Editor, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and to the staffs of the Bancroft Library, University of California, San Diego and Los Angeles City Libraries.

Special thanks are also expressed to Dr. Robert Glass Cleland of the Occidental College and Huntington Library and to Mrs. Edith Francis of the U. S. Employment Service, for their advice and assistance. In addition, appreciation is duly rendered by the compilers of this history to the officers of the different private corporations and of the various State, Federal and municipal agencies, the names of which appear here and there throughout this work. Due to the voluminous mass of detail consulted, only leading sources of information are listed in the bibliography appearing at the end of the volume.

As the title indicates, the purpose of this work is to present a non-technical history of the use and management of rural California lands from the first known record to the beginning of the unpredictable future. California's vast urban development has, in the main, been ignored except in a general way where it is closely related to companion rural land development and use.

If this volume proves of value as a general reference work on California's development and use of field, forest and mine, the authors will feel amply repaid for the time spent in its compilation.

San Francisco, California,  
December 31, 1944

S. B. S.  
W. S. B.





## CHAPTER I - FOREWORD

Stand on the busiest corner of one of our larger cities amid towering structures of steel and concrete while all around is the roar and clangor created by thousands of human beings scurrying like ants in, through, and over man-made structures. Nothing in sight or hearing but which has been fabricated by the hand of man and nowhere any evidence of contact with the soil or earth upon which man has reared his imposing edifices. Yet, if one will pause and think for a moment in the midst of this noisy din, he must admit that everything in sight came from the soil - directly or indirectly. Pursue that thought still further and he will realize that awake or sleeping, day or night, from the cradle to the grave, everything we eat, drink, or wear, every object we see or touch originally came from the land - The Good Earth. Even these bodies of ours must eventually return and mingle with the earth and in time become part of the soil from whence they came.

Regardless of man-made cities and the fact that many thousands of human beings may have no direct contact with the soil, they are one and all dependent upon it for their very existence, just as those humans who wrest a livelihood from the land itself.

Through the long centuries during which mankind has occupied the earth, there has been abuse as well as use of the land. Passing centuries have seen fertile valleys turned into desert wastes; populations of millions have been reduced to a few hardy survivors or wiped from the face of the earth, their very existence merely a memory recalled by the unearthing of their tools and weapons. Yet Nature -- the land in its primitive state -- provided every means for the sustenance of human life -- those animals endowed with reasoning power -- known to us as Man -- and by reason of higher intelligence developed through the ages became masters in getting and using the products of nature -- animal, vegetable, and mineral.

Civilized man draws from nature his living needs and added luxuries and as his numbers increase and his demands become greater, his withdrawal from nature's warehouse sometimes goes beyond her power to replace. Through the ages when man disturbed nature's balance without reparation or due care dead or decadent civilizations have been the result.

Through these centuries of use -- or misuse -- as civilization advanced, men in the Old World learned at least partially

CHAPTER I

The first part of the book is devoted to a general survey of the history of the subject. It begins with a discussion of the early attempts to explain the phenomena of life, and then proceeds to a more detailed examination of the various theories which have been advanced. The author then discusses the progress of the science of life, and the various methods which have been employed to study it. He then discusses the various branches of the science of life, and the various methods which have been employed to study them. He then discusses the various branches of the science of life, and the various methods which have been employed to study them.

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the lesson for the necessity of proper land use. Proper land use in some parts of the world had become an accomplished fact some five-odd centuries ago. They had before them concrete evidence in such examples as the rise and decay of the mighty Babylonian Empire, and the constant exodus of population to new lands when the lands abandoned would no longer afford them the necessities of life for even a bare and meagre existence.

Then came the discovery of the New World. Hardy explorers, venturing further and further afield, opened to millions in the densely populated areas of the Old World visions of limitless abundance and riches of the land almost beyond their dreams. Another exodus began, this time not of starving, underprivileged peoples, but hardy seasoned manhood seeking to better their lot in building new empires across the great oceans. As man progressed in science and invention, better transportation facilities developed and the best bloods of the earth mingled to form a new race in a new world, - the America of today.

The colonization and settlement of New England, the extension of Anglo-Saxon dominion to the South and the westward trend of the American pioneer to the great Mississippi is a story known to every schoolboy. After the shackles of the Mother Country were cast off by freedom-loving colonists, conquest of the great western wilderness moved at a much more rapid pace. While it took centuries for the white man to entrench himself in America as far west as the great dividing river, in a comparatively short span of years American settlement had marched across the Great Plains and over the rugged Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast.

The United States of America had created a new freedom on the basis of human equality and equal rights to the use of the land and its products. No monarchy, no ruling class, no serfdom, but instead, the inalienable rights of each man to the products wrung from the earth, directly or indirectly, by the use of his hands and brain, the interests and welfare of the individual being shared with those of the commonwealth of which he was a part.

The news of the new freedom rang throughout the world. Europe, with its throttling, freedom-hampering customs, heard the call and the tide of emigrants from many lands mingled with the native stock to form the melting pot of peoples constituting the greatest democracy the world had yet known.





The gates of the land of freedom were wide open and the millions rolled in to new lands and a new life. Why not? Were there not inexhaustible empires of land, unlimited natural resources, boundless horizons which beckoned the pioneers to advance. Farms and villages interspersed with thriving towns and cities dotted the landscape as a land-hungry people moved on and on. Use of the land often meant "abuse" with slight consideration given to the fact that when man disturbs Nature's balance, reparation must be made or changes will take place. As communities built up little thought was given to wild lands such as would not yield to the plow. Little thought was given to the fact that forested and mountain areas were usually the main contributory factor to the fertility of the adjacent valley.

The story of the development of what is America is a saga of courage, ingenuity and determination probably unparalleled in the history of the world. Time marched on with magic strides as these veritable empires of land yielded to the woodsman's axe, the miner's pick, or the pioneer's plow, while ever westward the tide of empire made its way.

Within the span of a human lifetime, productive farms replaced the range of the buffalo, teeming cities occupied the lands where Indian tepees had stood for generations, and swift-moving transportation routes obliterated the tracks made by slow-travelling ox teams. Men, who with their hands, wrested these lands from their aboriginal owners at the rifle's point, or slaughtered the herds of buffalo which had meant the existence of the native races for centuries, lived to see a transplanted, advanced civilization firmly entrenched in what was in their younger days the Great Western Wilderness.

Thinking in terms of land use it is considered that every acre of California land has some actual or potential value -- urban occupation, agricultural crop production, timber production, range use, wild life habitat, recreation, watershed and other aesthetic, and less tangible values.

In terms of economic worth the sand dunes of the Great Desert might require a hundred acres to support a jack rabbit, yet at certain seasons blossom forth in colorful bloom for the delight of flower lovers; the rocky crags of the High Sierra hold within their crevices eternal ice to feed the streams below and their rugged grandeur brings pleasure to the eyes of thousands; salt marshes and remote mountain fastnesses harbor and propagate wild life and areas appearing barren to the eye of the observer often bear great mineral wealth.



## II - CALIFORNIA, THE GREAT COMMONWEALTH

California! Land of Gold! Land of Beauty! Land of Contrasts! Poets have rhapsodized its mountains, its deserts, its flowers, its golden fruits; great artists have conveyed to enduring canvas the glories of California's seashore, mountains, pastoral scenes and forests. Even the great historian Bancroft, dealing with the cold, hard facts of history opens one of his leading works with the statement that "California has a just claim to the title of 'Garden of the World'". The fact-recording Encyclopedia Britannica opens its definition of California with -- "Physically one of the most remarkable, economically one of the more independent and in history and social life one of the most interesting (States) in the Union".

Probably in no other part of the world within a similar area can be found such a variety of contrasts and extremes in geological structure, climate, flora and fauna as in the commonwealth of California. Sub-zero weather obtains in some mountain valleys where considerable numbers of men are wresting a living from the soil, while at the same time in other sections of the State tillers of the earth, stripped to the waist, are toiling in an almost tropical sun amid tender vegetation and a profusion of warmth-loving plants. Snow-clad mountains seem but a stone's throw from golden orange groves and in some sections one can drive with an average automobile from oranges and Christmas roses to piled-up snowdrifts in a matter of minutes.

Mount Whitney rears its majestic head in the Sierra Nevada in Inyo County to an elevation of 14,495 feet, to make it the highest point of land in the continental United States; approximately 100 miles distant as the crow flies, in the same California county, Bad Water Sink in Death Valley, 279.6 feet below sea level, is the lowest spot of land in the nation. Mighty forests, containing the largest and oldest trees known, are counterbalanced by almost trackless deserts where no tree growth is in sight as far as the eye can see. Populous, modern cities lie next door to lands in their natural state over which native wild animals roam at will. Magnificent Alpine scenery contrasts its rugged grandeur with some of the most gorgeous flower gardens produced anywhere on earth. Immense ranches, lying fallow in the summer sun, or covered with growing crops spread over their square miles of territory, are found in the same general sections where families subsist in modest comfort on farms of pocket handkerchief size.





California is bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean for its entire length. The curved contour of the Pacific shoreline, swinging decidedly to the east, especially in the southern portion, gives California a length along the sea coast of 1,200 miles while the State's actual length, based on its stretch of latitude, is approximately 660 miles. Longitudinally, also, the distance measured from its northwest to southeast corners is 775 miles due to this curvature in shape. Its greatest width, in a line drawn east from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the Colorado River, is 235 miles. At its narrowest section, from a point drawn about northeasterly from the Golden Gate of San Francisco Bay to the southeast corner of Lake Tahoe, the distance is 148 miles.

The total area of the State is 158,297 square miles, or 101,310,080 acres, of which 99, 617,280 acres are land area and 1,692,800 acres are water surface. Government experts estimate that approximately 15,000,000 acres of the land surface can be considered arable, the balance being grazing lands, desert, semi-desert and mountains. Included in this approximate eighty million acres of non-arable rural lands, however, is a great wealth of forage, timber, oil and minerals. Geologically and climatically, the State can be roughly divided into six general zones or regions as follows:

1. North Coast
2. Central Coast
3. South Coast
4. Interior Valley
5. Desert
6. Mountain and Plateau

Politically, the State is divided into 58 counties ranging in size from San Francisco County, embracing the city of San Francisco and its environs, with an area of 26,880 acres, to San Bernardino County containing a land area of 12,912,000 acres, making it the largest individual county in the nation. Alpine County has a rural population of 160, while Los Angeles County figures show an urban population of 2,530,000 and rural residents to the number of 412,000, or a grand total of 2,942,000 people according to the 1940 census. These two counties also represent opposite extremes in that Los Angeles County contains 12,475 farms while Alpine County has only 55.

Most of the State has but two seasons, wet and dry, but again California contrasts enter the picture with an average annual





precipitation of 40.20 inches over a period of 47 years at Eureka in Humboldt County, and 2.55 inches at Brawley in Imperial County, taken from a 20-year record. In most of the valley areas of the State farming and other outdoor occupations can be carried on virtually the year around.

Before briefly describing the six general regions of California mentioned heretofore, it might be cited that the State produces nearly one-half of the nation's fresh fruit output; 95% of the dried fruit volume; a third of the national output of truck or garden crops; and almost a third of the country's canned vegetables. It may be said also that with no appreciable increase in acreage, farm production in California, due to the use of more intensive farming methods, increased 120% in the years 1909 to 1936.

#### 1. North Coast Region

The North Coast Region embraces the counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, most of Shasta county, the west half of Siskiyou county, Trinity county, and approximately the coast-side half of Mendocino county. The valleys of this section are mostly small, although there is considerable rich soil. Rainfall ranges from 40 to as high as 100 inches annually, and temperatures from a high of 100 to a low of 20. Rain rarely falls during July or August, but precipitation usually occurs in every other month of the year. The section generally is mountainous with a few areas rising above 6000 feet in elevation. This area includes most of the redwood timber belt. The products of the region include livestock, cereals, dairy products, fruits, lumber, fish and a limited amount of minerals.

#### 2. Central Coast Region

This region includes Lake, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and San Luis Obispo Counties, the north half of Santa Barbara County, parts of the western edges of Tehama, Glenn and Colusa Counties and the counties bordering the system of waters forming San Francisco Bay. Interspersed with fair-sized, fertile valley areas, this region is for the most part hilly and mountainous, some peaks within the area rising to an elevation of 4,000 feet. There is a considerable diversity of climate, highest summer temperatures ranging from 80 to 110 and lowest winter temperatures 30 to 20. The average annual precipitation over a long



term of years at valley points is from 15 to 32 inches. Valley lands are intensively cultivated and practically all of the agricultural products produced commercially in the State are common to this region. Some of the famous California crops such as the sugar beets of Salinas and Santa Maria, the prunes of Santa Clara Valley and the apples of Tajaro are harvested in this section of the State.

### 3. South Coast Region

This area includes the southern part of Santa Barbara County, Ventura County, the southwest three-fourths of Los Angeles County, Orange County, a small portion of the southwest corner of San Bernardino County, the approximate west one-quarter of Riverside County and the approximate west half of San Diego County. It covers the area between the sea coast and the Coast Ranges, extending eastward in the central portion for sixty or more miles to the foothills of the San Gabriel and San Jacinto mountain ranges. The average annual rainfall varies from 10 to 18 inches and winter temperatures of the valley sections rarely drop below 30 degrees. The entire region is, on the whole, much warmer and drier than the north coast regions of the State and in some parts of the area summer temperatures reach well over 100 degrees. It includes some of the highest valued farmlands in the State since within the area is located Southern California's large citrus belt. The diversity of crops covers the range of almost all agricultural products from livestock to oranges. It is noted also as a region of small farms, intensively used. As a descriptive name the area is often called the "Southern California Coastal Plain." With the city of Los Angeles as a hub, there is a large semi-rural population congregated in towns and cities ranging from metropolitan areas, second only to Los Angeles city itself, down to little villages with a few hundred families or less, living on tiny town lot farms. The rainfall is seasonal and at times abnormal in volume so that in the past the region has frequently been subject to disastrous floods.

### 4. Interior Valley Region

This area includes what is commonly called the "Great Valley of California," - the San Joaquin and Sacramento River Valleys, - embracing the region lying between the great Sierra Nevada range on the east and the coastal



areas on the west. It extends from the city of Redding in Shasta County, at the confluence of the Pit and Sacramento Rivers, south to the approximate center of Kern County as its southern extremity. The area is approximately 400 miles long with a width ranging from 40 to 60 miles. This Great Central Valley forming the Region constitutes a land area of about 12 million acres. As a whole it is marked by higher summer and lower winter temperatures than the coastal regions, the daytime mercury remaining at well over 100 fairly constantly during the summer months. An occasional low winter temperature of 20 degrees is reached. The average annual rainfall over a long period of years ranges from 40 inches at Redding and 20 inches at Sacramento, in the Sacramento Valley, to 10 inches at Fresno and 6 inches at Bakersfield in the San Joaquin Valley.

The region produces commercially over 100 agricultural crops, livestock, dairy products, an infinite variety of cereals, a wide range of fruits and nuts and practically every variety of vegetable grown. Cotton and rice are two staples heavily produced in comparatively recent years.

#### 5. Desert Region

This approximate ten-million-acre segment of Southern California includes all of Imperial County; all of Inyo County except the Sierra Nevada mountain section; approximately the eastern one-third of Kern County, and most of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, excluding the western portions which are not typically desert. Those parts of the Mojave and Colorado Deserts within California's boundaries are included in this region, where summer temperatures range as high as 130 degrees in the shade. Rainfall is scant. At Brawley, in the heart of the Imperial Valley, the average precipitation is two and one-half inches annually. Besides the great Imperial Valley, Coachella Valley, other smaller, less widely-known agricultural valleys are part of this division of the State. Only irrigation farming can be carried on and in spite of the tremendous development of the past three decades in this respect, future development will be even greater, based on the known facts of available water and available lands.

This region includes the great date-growing section of California, produces immense amounts of vegetables,







melons, citrus fruits, alfalfa and almost all the agricultural products grown commercially elsewhere in the State, the harvest season, however, being in the winter for many crops. Geologically, climatically and in an agricultural sense, it is a combination of Egypt, Arabia, and the Australian interior. Although this region has no known petroleum deposits, the value of other minerals produced is great.

## 6. Mountain and Plateau Region

This division of the State covers an area bounded by the eastern border of California and extending from the Oregon line south to Inyo County. It includes the Sierra Nevada extending into the low foothills on their western slope and running into the Tehachapi Range on the south, and the southern arm of the Cascade Range reaching down from Oregon. Generally speaking, it covers a great part of the area of California's main interior mountain ranges above an elevation of 1500 feet. This is the great water producing area of the State. With a climate somewhat similar to the eastern States, it forms California's great snow belt from which waters feed the streams running into and traversing the agricultural valleys below. The State's large volume of hydro-electric power is generated within this region. It includes a considerable area of mountain valleys and plateaus, some of which lie at elevations as high as six thousand feet. Summer temperatures range up to 100 with generally cool nights. Winter temperatures often drop to zero or lower. Naturally, a great deal of the precipitation of the region is in the form of snow and the greatest snow depths ever recorded in the United States have occurred within this area.

The region contains most of the merchantable timber of the State, outside of the coastal region, and the bulk of the mineral wealth. Many of the valleys, some of them of large size, comprise surprisingly fertile lands, and in spite of the short growing seasons and the fact that mid-June to mid-September is usually the only frost-free period of the year; a large volume of livestock, dairy products and hardy fruits and vegetables is produced annually. Some of these mountain valleys, indeed, are quite self-contained, producing foods and materials needed for an abundant existence. The area includes great open ranges used for livestock pasturage and comprises a large part of California's outdoor recreation area.



Leaving out water surfaces, the land area of California can be roughly classified as follows:

	<u>ACRES</u>
Urban Areas, (Incorporated towns, cities and roadways)	4,286,490
Producing farm lands (irrigated and unirrigated)	8,299,000
Potential crop and farm lands, (undeveloped)	3,868,000
Range and Pasture Lands, (non-agricultural)	24,064,440
Commercial Forest Lands, (virgin, cut-over, etc.)	19,705,700
Non-commercial Forest and Wild Lands, (open range, desert, watershed protection, etc.)	32,636,820
Special Service Lands (Recreation, Wildlife, shooting Grounds, etc.)	<u>6,756,830</u>
Total Land Surface Area of California	99,617,280

(In mentioning farmland areas it should be borne in mind that in most farms of any size there is a certain amount of sub-marginal land included in the farm area which reduces the arable land under actual tillage.)

One group of land use experts recently worked out the following figures in an endeavor to paint a general thumbnail statistical picture of California's land surface:

<u>Vegetative type cover, etc., of California Lands</u>	<u>Area (In millions of acres)</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Pine and pine-fir forest	16.6	16.5
Douglas fir forest	2.8	2.8
Redwood forest	2.0	2.0
Sub-alpine forest	5.3	5.3
Juniper and pinon forest	2.2	2.2
Woodland and chaparral	20.3	20.2
Grass and open range lands	22.1	22.0
Agricultural lands (cropland)	8.8	8.8
Desert (ungrazeable)	15.6	15.6
Cities, roads, water bodies, etc.	<u>4.6</u>	<u>4.6</u>
	100.3	100.0

California lands are widely distributed in ownership. Some of the largest individual private landowners of the nation are represented as well as a large number of small rural landowners. As the following figures show, approximately half of the acreage of the State is vested in private ownership.



### Land Ownership in California

	<u>Acres</u>
National Forests (net area of public lands)	19,553,000
National Parks and National Monuments	4,230,000
State Parks	314,000
Indian Lands (held in trust by the Government)	679,000
Other Publicly-owned Federal Lands	19,000,000
Other State and County and City Lands	5,385,000
Privately-owned	<u>50,456,280</u>
	99,617,280

Probably no area on earth has been so widely publicized through the years leading to its present development. Land booms have marked its progress for almost one hundred years beginning when the first great gold rush advertised its golden hills, fertile valleys and equitable climate.

In dealing with California lands and its products the adjacent waters of the Pacific Ocean cannot be overlooked. The products of the sea are, in every sense, a part of the economic wealth of the lands to which they are tributary and such products must be considered a part of the basic resources of the State. The wealth harvested from these coastal waters contributes largely to the economic welfare of California.

### Prehistoric California

In not many places on earth can prehistoric conditions of a region be more plainly pictured than in California. The La Brea Tar Pits, Los Angeles, have undoubtedly been in existence for millions of years, and preserved the wide range of animal life and a certain amount of the flora common to Southern California down through the ages. Aptly named "The Death Trap of the Ages", century after century, from the beginning of time it has caught and held in the sticky depths of the pits animals and birds whose remains have been embalmed for posterity. From these remains scientists have been able to reconstruct pretty much in detail that section of the country as it existed millions of years ago and, down to the time when the present geologic age was in the making.

In that locality, which was probably representative of a large section of the present State of California, immense swampy areas first harbored huge animals of the sloth type







such as the great dinosaur, combination of giant lizard and reptile, small replicas of which are found in our California lizards of today. Time, measured in thousands of centuries, produced as a development of the sloth-like creatures, the great mastodons, elephants of immense size covered with wooly fur. One of the giant elephants of a far gone time has been named by modern scientists "The Imperial Elephant". The skeleton of one of these huge creatures, the bones of which were found complete to the last detail in the La Brea Pits, is now mounted at the Exposition Park, Los Angeles and measures thirteen feet high at the shoulders.

Gradually changing through the Cenozoic age by the law of the survival of the fittest, the slow-moving animals were displaced by swifter moving beasts of the carnivorous type which preyed on the former, the mixture of the flesh and plant eating animals being distributed somewhat after the manner of the same types in tropical jungle wild lands of the present day. These prehistoric animals of California included the three-toed horse, progenitor of our present domestic animal; camels; animals of the deer species; the saber-tooth tiger; wolves; bears, and other carnivore.

From the remains found in this one small area it is quite evident that animal life in prehistoric California was quite prolific. That the same wild life existed over the State generally is evidenced by the unearthing of fossilized remains in nearly all sections. In the Lava Beds National Monument, located in the extreme northeastern part of the State, is a large cavern known as Fossil Cave. Government officers have taken from the floor of this cave, 40 feet below the present ground surface, fossilized bones which have been identified as those of the mastodon, camel, saber-toothed tiger and others of the same type as those found in the La Brea Pits in the extreme south. The present climate of these two sections of the State is extremely dissimilar in the present age.

With all the evidences of an abundant animal and bird life living on California lands in prehistoric times, no hint has been found of human life such as the Cro-Magnon man of 32,000 years ago, nor of the Neanderthal man of many thousands of years still earlier. From the best evidence students have been able to collect, the greatest antiquity of man on the Pacific Coast and in California is 12,000 years, or within the present geologic age.



It is a fairly well established fact that the forerunners of the Indian tribes who inhabited California at the coming of the first white men crossed the Bering Strait, or a land bridge there, from the Asiatic continent about that far back. This is long after dinosaurs, mastodons, saber-tooth tigers and such wild life had disappeared from the earth. It is quite safe to assume, therefore, that the ancestors of the modern Indian tribes found California's land, flora, and fauna, much the same as did the first white men to land on its shores.



### CHAPTER III - INDIAN USE AND OCCUPANCY

#### Indian Population

Many long centuries before the coming of the white man California supported a large Indian population. Aboriginal inhabitants lived, moved and had their being the entire length and breadth of the State, - along the coast, in the mountain valleys of the Sierra, in the great interior valley region and even in the desert and semi-desert areas. All of them lived off the land of the section in which their particular tribe was located.

No one knows with any degree of certainty the size of this Indian population. The California Indians were nomadic in their habits only to the extent of moving from place to place within the section of the country inhabited by their forbears for centuries. Early-day explorers, finding a considerable Indian population in one locality and a comparatively short distance away another concentration of aboriginals, were perhaps wont to exaggerate their numbers over a large area, especially in view of the fact that their own exploring or pioneering parties were relatively small in comparison. We must, therefore, estimate the Indian population by a happy medium of the sometimes sketchy records left by these early day explorers and the reports of archaeologists reconstructing their habits, life and numbers through the unearthing of their remains and of the weapons and utensils they used in their daily existence.

It is known positively that 30,000 Indians came under the spiritual or secular influence of the 21 Franciscan Missions established and operated by Father Junipero Serra, his associates and successors between 1769 and 1832. These records show also 86,000 persons baptized during that period. However, these Missions were located along the road called El Camino Real (The King's Highway), traversing California south to north along the coast or fairly close to it. The Mission furthest north was located in Sonoma, less than two-thirds the median length of the State. While the Mission Fathers did a pretty thorough job of gathering the adjacent tribes into the Mission folds, the more distant tribes were not included among the neophytes and there is a constant reference in the Mission records to the "gentiles" or "wild Indians".

With the Spaniards and later the Mexicans, the Indians had no social or economic standing and only vague estimates of





original numbers of aboriginals were ever available to their officials. The chief problem of the military and civil authorities was to keep the tame Indians properly tamed and kill off any wild ones threatening the agricultural and economic peace and prosperity of the respective communities under their jurisdiction.

Almost equally vague were the figures on Indian population given by the early American pioneers. On February 1, 1846, John Marsh, writing from the Sacramento delta region to Lewis Cass, prominent mid-Western statesman, gave as his estimate of California's population on that date, 7,000 persons of Spanish descent; 700 Americans; 100 English, Irish, and Scotch; 100 French, Germans and Italians; 10,000 civilized or domesticated Indians, and "probably a million naked brute Indians." Marsh was as well acquainted with the California of that time as any man living and while his figures on the other classes of California residents are probably fairly accurate, his statement relative to the "naked brute Indians" must be taken more or less as a figure of speech.

The following year, John A. Sutter, accredited Government Indian Agent for California, reported the existence of 479 tame Indians and 21,873 wild Indians in the area east of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers which would include, roughly, the east half of the Sacramento Valley and the north half of the San Joaquin Valley. Government agents during gold rush days set the Indian population figure at 75,000 to 100,000, but this was after much depopulation due to murder by whites, wars, disease and changed habits of living.

In 1829 Kit Carson, famous Indian scout, says he saw thousands of Indians in Napa Valley. General Bidwell in 1849 found 1,000 Indians living where Colusa now stands. In 1850 Lieut. G. H. Derby, U. S. A., found 1,000 Indians living around Tule Lake in the south end of San Joaquin Valley. Joaquin Miller, poet of the Sierra, who actually lived for years among them, writing in 1870, mentions the thousands of Indians living in Pit River Valley during the fifties. Spanish explorers of the 17th and 18th centuries mention the populous Indian villages, located fairly close together, existing along the Pacific coast.

C. Hart Merriam, noted authority on California Indian life before the coming of the white man, and whose research activities covered the entire state, estimated that there were 260,000 Indians living in California before the white man came and that this same number existed in the year 1800.



Other authorities place the number of Indians of California about the beginning of the 19th century at from 130,000 to 150,000. Since little in early California days was known of tribes along the east side of the Sierra Nevada or those of the interior mountain valleys, and in such heavily populated Indian sections as Clear Lake, Tule Lake and Upper Pit River Valley, where large Indian populations existed, it is quite safe to assume that an average population of at least 200,000 Indians resided in what is now California prior to the coming of the white man. One strange fact, however, is that in some cases tribes or settlements of Indians lived off an area of California land that supports a smaller number of white people in this civilized day and age.

### Indian Tribes

Although there were many tribes and branches of tribes, the main divisions of the Indian races living in California prior to white exploration were the Chemehuevi in extreme southeastern California; the Chumash living mainly in the Coast Region north to Morro Bay; the Pomo ranging along the northern coast section; the Maidu in the north central mountain section; the Monos and Kosos east of the Sierra Nevada and extending into Nevada; the Tulares in the southern San Joaquin Valley; the Hoop (or Hupa) in the Trinity Region; the Shastas further to the east; and the Modocs, Pits, Klammaths and Paiutes in the extreme northeastern section, the hunting grounds of these last three tribes extending from Oregon and Nevada into California.

There were hosts of tribes, and generally, no two authorities agree on even the names of the different branches. Because of the diversity of opinion, Herbert Howe Bancroft in his excellent treatise on California Indians, winds up by making only three divisions -- Southern California, Central California and Northern California Indians, with the Shoshone stock coming into the picture somewhat from Oregon and Idaho to the north. He states, "The whole system of nomenclature is so complicated and contradictory that it is impossible to reduce it to perfect order."

John A. Sutter, writing in the latter 1830's, stated there were over twenty separate Indian tribes living within a short distance of New Helvetia and that tribes or subtribes living but a few miles apart spoke entirely different dialects. However, in all parts of the State the different subdivisions of these original Americans had many things in common in their daily habits of life and their methods of wresting a living from the lands around them.





### Indian Land Users

While, generally speaking, the Indians of California were not the fierce fighters represented by the Sioux, Apaches or Blackfeet, and in many cases were less intelligent and advanced, they had in common with the Plains Indians the fact that they lived off the land, owing their existence solely to what this land provided in its natural state. Fish and game, nuts and roots, berries and wild cereals formed their diet and the minerals, flora and fauna of the same land provided what their living needs called for in the way of shelter and bodily covering, their crude weapons, and the implements of their daily existence.

Possibly a combination of climate and Nature's well stocked larder was the reason California Indians never reached the cultural stage of the Aztecs to the south or of the larger and better organized tribes to the East. Commenting on the fact that Indians living for the most part in one of the finest climates in the world were very much animal-like, Bancroft further states, "The Californians, comparatively speaking, wear no clothes, build no houses, do not cultivate the soil, have no boats, nor do they hunt to any appreciable extent; they have no morals nor any religion worth calling such."

However, the historian, Bancroft, was considering the California Indians en masse, for in different localities visited by various pioneer explorers, different customs and even different people were found. One might almost be tempted to call California a melting pot of Indian races in which the ingredients were never properly mixed. Some early-day explorers in describing California Indians, mention that the squaws were broad-faced, lumpy in figure, and awkward in gait, with the men much of the same calibre. Others mention fine-looking men and really pretty women, lithe of figure, and with red showing through their dusky cheeks. Around Suisun Bay stalwart warriors were found, their chief being fully seven feet tall. On the Trinity and Eel Rivers there were said to be tribes of apish countenances and repulsive appearance.

Klamaths or Modocs in the extreme northern part of the State were found wearing clothing of rabbit skins and buckskin fashioned with considerable skill. Some Indian tribes did build fairly good houses such as those of the Hupa tribe, which were made of heavy timbers, or the shelters made by the Modocs of rough-hewn planks of massive proportions.

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The tribes of the Santa Barbara Coast area constructed rather elaborate thatched conical dwellings even equipping them with rude sleeping bunks and reed mattresses, with reed curtains to separate the sleepers. Some tribes had no shelters at all other than that provided by natural caves or brush lean-tos constructed on the spur of the moment.

Evidently, Bancroft did not mean to be taken literally when he included all tribes in his statement of their having no boats. The Canalinos of Southern California built a boat of large dimensions for coast fishing. Many tribes whose territory bordered on deep waters, including those around the San Francisco Bay region, never progressed beyond rude boats or rafts of bulrushes, but some tribes had really elaborate canoes -- invariably of the dugout type. The tribes in the interior whose lands were traversed by deep rivers used both dugouts and the simpler form of bullrush rafts. One early American explorer tells of a native canoe on Smith River which was 42 feet long and carried 24 men, still leaving room, as he phrases it, "for tons of supplies." Wherever there was timber handy to navigable waters the dugout canoe was part of the Indian's means of travel and livelihood. Redwood, pine, fir, sycamore and cottonwood, are all spoken of as canoe material by early chroniclers. Invariably the canoes were hollowed out by the skillful use of fire, and fire was also used for bringing the tree selected for the primitive boat to earth. Pine resin and tar were used for caulking.

#### Indian Weapons and Utensils

The universal weapon of all Indian tribes was the bow and arrow. The bow was usually made of yew or juniper, reinforced for resiliency by being wrapped with animal sinew. The arrows were made of the lightest and straightest wood available, or sometimes of woody reeds, tipped with bone or such stone as obsidian. Supplemental weapons or implements were the spear, knife and awl, or punch. Stone tomahawks or hatchets were a comparative rarity among the California Indians although hardwoods were used freely both for war clubs or digging implements. Toggle-headed spears with rope attached with which to pull in the fish were used by salmon fishing tribes.

Cooking utensils were made of stone, basketry and occasionally seashells. The mortar and pestle used for grinding or mashing food were the universal kitchen utensils of the aborigines. A great deal of the crude Indian cooking was



a roasting process carried on in pits covered with earth. Clay vessels were unknown till the advent of the Spaniards and when boiling of food was resorted to, it was done by means of dropping heated stones into the food ingredients in a waterproof basket.

Even the most backward tribes of California Indians were expert basket makers and most of the evidence of any skillful sense of art or craft possessed by them is expressed through this medium. The Pomo tribes along the northern coast excelled as basket makers, but the Maidus, still further north near the Oregon line, the Tulares in the south San Joaquin Valley, the Shastas in the mountain section and the Hupas\*of Trinity County were all close seconds in the art. The Southern California Coast Indians, highly skilled in the making of stone implements and weapons, were somewhat behind many of the other tribes in basketmaking skill, due, no doubt, to the easy availability of natural pitch or tar used to waterproof their baskets.

A wide variety of materials was used in making baskets, from tree bark of various species, and willow branches, down to the finest of slender-stemmed grasses. Tules or bulrushes of various sorts formed one of the commonest materials, different colored fibers being used to work in the patterns which ran meticulously true to the design being followed. The Pomos made their best baskets from rootstocks of various plants. Since Indian women, almost from the cradle to the grave, worked incessantly during daylight hours, and when not gathering food devoted their time to such tasks as basket making, this product of their skill covered a wide range.

Baskets of different forms and patterns entered into every phase of the daily life of the Indians, and it is interesting to note how the baskets were made to fit the purpose for which used -- coarse baskets of easy manufacture for gathering acorns, carrying fish and similar uses; finer meshed baskets for collecting the smaller food seeds and elaborately woven and decorated baskets of various shapes and designs for ceremonial or decorative uses.

It must have been a wonderful day for several thousand Indians along the coast line of Southern California when steatite, or soapstone, was discovered. Its bright metallic appearance, quite apart from the fact that it was easily worked, undoubtedly appealed to the savage heart. Resistant to heat, this material was widely used by the Indians of this section for utensils and weapons.





Quarries of steatite found on Catalina Island around a hundred years ago were evidently being worked by aboriginal inhabitants long before the dawn of the Christian era. That this material was traded from tribe to tribe is evidenced by the fact that Indian utensils of soapstone have been found far inland where it does not exist in its natural state. Only a few years ago a cunningly fashioned ceremonial knife made in the form of a running coyote was found in northwestern Nevada on an old Paiute hunting ground.

### Indian Food

General John C. Fremont, writing of his first contact with California Indians said, "In his wild state the Indian has to get food. This is his business ... The labor of their lives was to get something to eat. The occupation of the women was in gleaning from the earth everything of vegetable or insect life -- the occupation of every man was to kill every animal they could for food."

Probably no Indians on the north American continent used such a wide variety of food as those native to California. Outside of the scattering of a few seeds of wild tobacco to augment the natural supply of this universally-used narcotic, there is no record of California Indians ever having cultivated any crop before the coming of the white man. Certain families or sub-tribes did have special "orchards" or natural gardens of oak, manzanita, tule patches or other food producing trees or plants which were reckoned as part of the family wealth. Nothing much was done in any way, however, to assist Nature to produce more bountifully.

To the tribes of the north and mountain area the deer family of different species were what the buffalo was to the Plains Indians. The deer meant food, clothing and sometimes shelter to the many Indian tribes of the colder sections of California. Implements and utensils were made from the horns and bones, including such items of everyday use as needles for sewing; the hide was used for protective clothing and no edible part of the meat was wasted. Even in a camp of 20th century Indians engaged in deer hunting, the squaws can be seen drying various parts of the entrails for food.

The Coast Indians, as well as the tribes living on the larger rivers where fish were plentiful did not depend so much on the deer species for sustenance. However, the flesh of any animal which could be taken by snare, net or





pointed weapon was used by one or another of the various tribes. About the only exceptions were poisonous reptiles and one of the commoner and larger animals of the State, the bear. Invariably, the Indians had a mixed veneration for and fear of this animal to such an extent that the few which were killed in self defense were rarely utilized for either the meat or the hide. This is paralleled, perhaps, by the feeling of repugnance white people possess against the use of certain animals for food even though such may be strictly vegetarian in their diet, cleanly in their habits, and their meat tasty and nourishing.

Indians were heavy meat eaters. The horse was an animal unknown to them until the advent of the Spaniards and when this new form of animal flesh came among them they surreptitiously sampled it and found it good eating. Because horses were easy to capture compared to the native wild animals, and comprised a large bulk of animal food in one piece, the Indians became expert horse thieves, even before the animal itself was adopted for use. Eighteenth century Spanish explorers invariably mention the necessity of especially guarding their horses against the depredations of the savages and their particular fondness for horsemeat -- a taste which persisted among them till modern times. California Indians were never cannibalistic although portions of the flesh of enemies were sometimes eaten as a ritualistic ceremony.

Fish was a staple diet of Indians living on the sea coast and dwelling along the larger rivers; in fact, it formed one of the principal items of subsistence for the bulk of California's Indian population. Manuel Venegas, writing from Madrid in 1758 of his recent California expedition, speaks of the large numbers of game and animals and shore birds, adding that, "If the soil of California be in general barren, the scarcity of provisions is made up by the sea ... The multitude are incredible." He devotes considerable space in his report to the King of Spain on the sea foods available, mentioning the plentitude of abalones, oysters and other mollusks, and the possibilities of pearl fishing.

Pedro Fages, afterwards twice governor of California, in a report to the Spanish monarch of the exploratory expedition from San Diego to Monterey in 1769, wrote, "There is an abundance of all needed seeds for their (the Indians') use and many acorns ... The fishing is so good, and so great is the variety of fish, known in other seas, that this industry alone would suffice to provide sustenance to all the settlers which this vast stretch of country would receive." Even the



astute Fages, however, could never have visualized the harvest of 1941, taken from California's coastal waters, with a value of over sixty-eight million dollars.

Discarding the present day terms of calories and vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates, a balanced diet has always been known to consist of bread, ( starches and cereals); meat ( the flesh of animals, birds, fish, or even the bodies of insects); fruits and vegetables (the wide variety of green legumes and acid foods); and a certain amount of sweets. The California Indians, in their native state, usually had all of these in a wide variety and abundance in all parts of the commonwealth.

The staple bread food of the larger part of the California tribes was acorns from almost all the varieties of native oak. The east side tribes substituted pinon pine nuts for the standard acorn and the mountain tribes the epa, or "apau", and sometimes the onion-like highland potato. However, over twenty-five species of seeds were used as bread foods by the Northern California Indians alone, chief of which was the common wild oats. Wild rice, wild buckwheat and clover seeds were other seeds commonly used.

Wild oats and seeds of a similar nature were rather skillfully prepared by being tossed about in shallow baskets into which live coals had been thrown. This had the effect of singeing off the points and parching the seeds which were afterwards pounded and pulverized by means of the universal pestle and mortar. Wild kidney beans were a common article of diet in ancient Southern California.

The acorn, however, was a staple bread food for the bulk of California's Indian population and, in fact, is still largely used by many Indian families as a supplement to the white man's diet. Although the acorn is acrid-tasting in its natural state, after treatment by the Indian women under a method used from time immemorial, the bread baked from acorn flour was voted a tasty food by chroniclers of early days. Fages, in 1769, describes the process of making acorn flour which has not varied through the centuries even up to the present time. The acorns were first skinned, dried in the sun, and then beaten in mortars until reduced to a coarse powder. This powder, or flour, was then bleached and washed in baskets to take out the acid. Sometimes this washing was done in a depression in the sand, the acrid water draining into the soil. The finished product was a sort of dough of the consistency of cheese which was eaten raw, baked into a bread, or boiled to form a mush or gruel. The general term "pinole" was applied by the Spaniards to this product or to any form of meal or bread made from seeds or nuts by the Indians.





Nowhere in the world, perhaps, within a similar area, is there a greater variety of bulbous-rooted lilaceous plants than in the State of California. Scores of different varieties exist. The widely-used camas of the central California Indians was duplicated by the yanch of the Klamaths -- the regular marsh-plant with potato-like root still relished by members of that tribe. Many species of reed plants with their bulbous roots contributed largely to the starches of the Indian diet all over the State, and the tender shoots of these plants were often eaten like modern garden asparagus.

Fremont, on his expedition of 1843, tells of seeing large areas dug up by squaws along the California-Oregon line where they harvested the camas roots and dried them for food. Northern tribes frequently collected the seeds of large lily pads, roasted them and stored them for winter use. The epa of the mountain country, with its rice-like flavor, is still avidly collected by Indians, and even white people of those sections sometimes purchase quantities of this tasty, starchy root from the Indian harvesters.

The common chokecherry were dried in large quantities. Wild plums and sarvice berries were gathered and dried in localities where these fruits abounded and were also stored for winter use. Manzanita berries were universally harvested for a food crop. When fully matured and dried, manzanita berries were mealy in texture and very nutritious, although sometimes fatal if eaten in large quantities in their raw state. Special excursions of some considerable duration were made by the valley and coast tribes to the mountains for these special foods, which were dried or cured on the harvesting grounds. Prickly pears of the cactus were used extensively for fruit food by the southern tribes and this fruit was usually found growing right around their habitations. A rather large variety of plants was used in natural condition for greens, and the Indians of Mendocino, for instance, still gather wild clover for this purpose.

Small, tender varieties of seaweed were gathered and eaten by the coast tribes. Digger pine nuts were a prolific source of food by many tribes, and in addition to the widely used pinon nuts, seed from sugar pine and other coniferous trees was collected for food. Chinquapin nuts, nuts of the California nutmeg and laurel nuts, after parching, all entered into the Indian diet. In the interior valley region grasshoppers were collected freely and roasted or dried for food although they were evidently never considered a dependable food staple.





Even the large fruit of the California Buckeye or Horse Chestnut, although deadly poison when eaten raw, was used by several tribes for food. Soaked in water for hours and cooked by baking in a hole in the ground, it was eaten freely by Indians, but not dried or stored due to its poor keeping qualities. As an anomalous situation with respect to this common California fruit, the same tribes using the buckeye nut for food also used it as a poison when some member of the tribe for ritualistic or other reasons decided it was necessary for him to commit suicide.

Manuel Venegas, in 1758, mentions the Indians using wild "Garbanzo Peas" for food, the forerunner of the cultivated crop now known as Garbanzo Beans or Mexican Chick Peas. He also speaks of another present day staple growing and used by the Indians still called, as then, "Kidney beans." He mentions the palatability of a seed pod called "gaberneda" which they roasted and ate freely. Buds of the century plant were a favorite food and known to the southern tribes as "tlatemado".

Various kind of fungi were used for food on occasion and in times of food shortage, even the lichens of various trees. In times of actual famine tribes living in the timbered regions subsisted on the common black moss found on pine trees, since it was found that this unpalatable growth would sustain life;

None of the earlier chroniclers mention Indian use of wild honey. Fages tells of the Coast tribes in 1759 separating the pulp from the seed of a large shrub, which was probably a species of manzanita, and drying this fruit pulp in the sun. The result, he states, was cakes of very fair sugar. Tribes living in or near the sugar pine belt during the spring months were wont to strip the outer bark from the tree and scrape off the mucilaginous layer which they used as a sweet. The sugary nature of many of the native berries in themselves provided sweets for the aboriginal palate.

All over the State leaves of a considerable variety of plants were used to brew tea, either for a food drink or for medicinal purposes, the common mint being one of the most widely used. No intoxicants were brewed or drunk by California Indians prior to white occupation, but the use of tobacco in its wild state was universal. Indians on occasion were known to become intoxicated on this narcotic. According to some early Spanish writers not only was tobacco smoked in pipes, but mixed with other ingredients to form a sort of paste, it was eaten by the Indians. Some of them speak of the Indians using it as a form of stimulant by eating it sparingly to the exclusion of other foods when undertaking long or strenuous



journeys. Since their references to this form of use are rather casual, it is probable, in the main, that the Indians chewed the narcotic rather than actually eating it.

A wide variety of herbs was used by the Indians as medicine, ranging from concoctions brewed from the common sagebrush of various species to the wide use of wormwood and the well known Yerba Santa (holy herb). The curative qualities of many Indian herbs were later taken advantage of by both Spanish and Mexican pioneers.

The Indians were great eaters, even to the point of gluttony. The Spanish expedition of 1759 found the Indians of Monterey and the San Francisco Bay region regularly eating twice daily. The first meal, these authorities say, was taken before dawn and its consumption lasted a full hour. The second started in midafternoon, but Fages, the chronicler, states that it was of four hours duration -- evidently the Indians stuffed themselves till evening when sleep overcame them. Special feasts were of common occurrence. The Indians in periods of plenty or when there was a food surplus gorged themselves to utilize it before spoilation.

#### Native Clothing

Materials for Indians' bodily covering came, of course, from the flora and fauna around them. Where climatic conditions allowed or current weather permitted, the males of many tribes went entirely naked or wore a simple loin cloth. The females of all tribes and all ages wore bodily covering. The Indians dressed for protection from the rigors of weather or against the natural hazards surrounding them and not from any sense of modesty. However, the males of all tribes invariably had some sort of clothing for ceremonial occasions.

The commonest female garment was a short skirt, longer behind than in front, made of pleated tules or reeds, softened by beating, and strung together with fiber threads, such as mescal. The upper part of the body, legs and feet were usually left naked. Both sexes wore blankets when weather conditions warranted. These were made from rabbit skins, other furs, deer skins, bird plumage or coarse cloth woven from native fiber plants or tree bark. Such head covering as was worn usually took the form of pleated basketry. The elaborate feathered headdress of the plains tribes was seldom worn by California Indians..





Squaws were expert tanners and the quality of buckskin made from the raw deer hides by their primitive methods has never been excelled by modern manufacturers. The deer hide was soaked in water impregnated with tree bark or other vegetative substances till the hair loosened, and was then thoroughly scraped. A concoction of heated deer brains was then vigorously rubbed into the hide which was dried slowly. The treated skin was tediously beaten and sometimes methodically and thoroughly chewed by these women to insure perpetual softness.

As well as being expert tanners, the squaws were good furriers and weavers. Among the northern tribes skins of small animals, such as the fox, were made into quivers for carrying arrows, as well as into clothing. These fur quivers as a finished product, were virtually of the same shape as when on the animal's back with an opening for the insertion or withdrawal of the arrows.

The Indians of the Mountain and Plateau Region where the climate was more severe also wore moccasins and leggins of deer-skin, often with the hair left on the inner side for warmth. Doublets or jackets made of fur or buckskin were sometimes worn under the blanket. Even though it was the natural preference of the male Indians to go naked, garments of a sort were fashioned by all of the tribes even if used only on ceremonial occasions. Sometimes these were profusely decorated since the more advanced tribes manufactured dye coloring or pigments from various shrubs, trees and rocks.

An illustration of the Indians' feeling toward clothing is given by Manuel Venegas when he tells of two Indian boys taken under the wing of an early day missionary. He fed them, rewarded them with pleasing trinkets and won their firm devotion. However, he also insisted on their wearing simple clothing. The boys were in the habit of serving the priest daytimes and returning to their own people at night. Because of the clothing they wore they were so ridiculed and jered at by old and young members of their tribe of both sexes that they finally dressed only when within sight of the missionary, hanging their clothes in trees and returning naked to their own people at night.

In the Mountain Region a coarse cloth was woven from the bark of the cottonwood, the aspen and the white fir. Bark of alder and other trees of the section was boiled to manufacture dye stuff to color the coarse weave.





## Primitive Food Storage

From the earliest contact of the white races with the Indians the Indians have been termed stupid, lazy and above all, improvident. Those intrepid explorers, Venegas and Fages, the most prolific writers on California of the middle 18th century, called them respectively "adult children" and "A nation who never arrive at manhood." Their improvidence was stressed by later visitors. They did, nevertheless, make considerable provision for contingencies and possible food shortages. Sometimes they died of starvation or undernourishment, but this was often due to shortage of native crops, drouths, unusually long or severe winters, or perhaps loss by theft of foodstuffs due to tribal warfare. However, famine conditions also visited contemporary civilized peoples.

Indians of the Northern Coast section, the Klamath Territory or the Modoc and Shasta areas, invariably dried their fish during seasons of plenty and stored them for winter use. Almost all the tribes stored acorns in large wicker baskets somewhat after the modern farm manner of storing corn in cribs. Food caches were placed in trees and the tree trunks were smeared with resin or pitch to protect the store from vermin. Caves were used for storage and food was sometimes buried in underground caches.

The peculiarly-shaped huge baskets of the once powerful Cahuilla tribe of Southern California were used for acorn storage for decades after the Cahuillas were penned up within a 15,000 acre reservation in the San Jacinto Mts. In spite of the fact that the Indians had meanwhile been domesticated in modern homes they continued to use their baskets. One early-day writer tells of the Modoc Indians so carefully burying their winter stores as a precaution against theft by other tribes that they could not themselves find them and suffered greatly as a consequence.

To the Indians, food supplies were a community possession. Their lives were so uncertain that at times the warriors, or men of fighting age, did not sleep in the community houses or shelters, but, taking their weapons with them, sought shelter in a cave or in some other natural protective covering. They were invariably friendly and hospitable and shared their food freely with the first white visitors. Only when they were ousted from their lands, their homes ravished and fellow tribesmen killed did they turn on the white invaders and fight them according to their own rules of savage warfare. Their personal courage was never doubted even by the white frontiersmen who classed them as "varmints", to be killed with as little



compunction as would be rattlesnakes or prowling coyotes. Although wars between Indians and whites in California were relatively minor, one-sided contests, tribal leaders such as Stanislaus and Modoc Jack proved that men of more than average intelligence could be produced under the stress and strain of persecution.

### Indian Fishing and Hunting

In hunting, California Indians, as a rule, did not use the bow and arrow as freely as the Plains tribes although it was the standard weapon in the warfare which was constantly going on among the various tribes and races. Traps, snares and nets were more commonly used, and Indian hunting was invariably a close contact with the game pursued. Hunters often disguised themselves with the hide, head, and horns of the same animal being hunted and crept up on their game through the vegetative cover for a close kill. In the open country antelope were enticed close by taking advantage of their native curiosity and by the aboriginal hunter lying on his back and waving his legs above the brush.

The Pit River tribe of Indians owe their name to the custom of constructing pits for the trapping of game, the same method being used by some other California tribes. The unsuspecting animal, following his usual trail, breaking through a carefully camouflaged covering, fell into a deep hole in the ground. Here he was easily dispatched by speares or died by being impaled on sharp stakes of horns of other animals arranged in the pit.

Some tribes, such as the Veerds of Humboldt Bay, took advantage of a narrow canyon or some other topographic formation and constructed a slight fence of bark or other materials of some magnitude which formed a V at the further end. Into this game animals were driven by noise and shouts and dispatched at the narrow apex by the spears of the hunters. Indians whose hunting territory included large, sparsely vegetated open spaces, staged communal rabbit drives, using much the same methods as those in vogue at the present time.

Loop snares were used extensively for catching small game. The Indians used net traps to a considerable extent since the fibers of a variety of plants such as Indian Hemp, Rocky Mt. Flax, and even the common nettle were utilized to make cords and ropes.

Wild pigeons and other small birds were taken by means of a shutter trap worked with a cord manipulated by the concealed hunter. The birds were lured to and into the trap by seeds of







their favorite food. Many tribes took shore birds by stretching a net across a river or slough on their feeding grounds. Decoy birds were secured closely adjacent to the net and when the free birds rose to fly at an alarm by the hunters they were caught in the meshes on their first low-winged rise from the feeding grounds.

The Indian hunter had no sporting instinct and no game laws or limits to hamper his efforts. His one idea was to secure food, and to do this he pitted his superior human intelligence against the animal and bird life of the land, having acquired through generations a deep knowledge of the habits and weaknesses of the creatures sought. Of these there was usually no scarcity, and in California he lived with a minimum of effort in a hunter's and fisherman's paradise.

Indians along the reaches of the Klamath and lower Sacramento Rivers derived a large part of their livelihood from fishing. Early-day American explorers tell of Indians on the Klamath River spearing fish when a lone fisherman would take as high as 25 large salmon in an hour's time.

Besides the universal method of spearing, Indians took fish by means of nets or seines and traps. Northern California Indians built rather elaborate dams across the rivers at strategic points to impede the run of salmon to their spawning ground and to make spearing easier. Funnel-shaped traps, fashioned by willow branches, were used for catching eels and smaller fish. Smelt and similar fish were seined by the thousands. One method widely used in river or creek fishing was to dam the stream at low water at two widely separated points. Turkey mullein, a common California weed was gathered, crushed, and thrown in large quantities into the stream between the dams, poisoning, or more properly, suffocating, all fish life in the area treated. Travellers in California upwards of a century ago mention the enormous quantity of fish taken by this method. No harmful effects resulted from the eating of fish thus taken, either by the Indians or later by white settlers coming among them.

#### Southern Coast Indians

Venegas, writing in 1769 of the first Spanish exploration of California, and Pedro Fages at a somewhat later date, both mention the populous tribes living along and closely adjacent to the sea coast region between San Diego and San Luis Obispo and in the vicinity of Monterey Bay. Of the area around San Luis Obispo Fages states, "It is not to be denied that this land exceeds all the preceding territory in fertility and abundance of all things necessary for sustenance."



In writing of this same locality at that same time he mentions the ferocious grizzly bears existing in such numbers that large stretches of ground were literally plowed up by them in their search for food.

Both these early-day writers mention the concentration of Indian population along the Santa Barbara Channel and Fages says there were 6,000 Indians living in five towns in this area, a figure which was verified or even exaggerated by later day ethnologists and archaeologists. Due to the untiring efforts of these modern investigators a splendid, visual record of the life and daily habits of these early day Californians, their tools, utensils, weapons, shelters and dress is now displayed in the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

The parent stock of these tribes was the Chumash and the present day scientists have classified them into three cultures, First, Second and Third, extending back through a period of 12,000 years. People of the Third Culture are characterized as quite intelligent, of good physique, and pleasing appearance. Not only do weapons and utensils unearthed in recent years show a considerable improvement in art and skill of fabrication, but shapes of the skulls taken from ancient burial mounds shows a trend from the ape-like head of the California Coast Indian of 12,000 years ago to a head shaped like that of the Indians found by the first Caucasian visitors.

The investigators have further classified these early-day Santa Barbarans as the Oak Grove people of 10,000 years ago, composed of ape-like creatures who roamed the oak woods of the coast range; the Hunting People of 6,000 years ago whose hunting weapons were distinctly superior to those of the people of the First Culture, and the Canalinos, whose less ancient, or Third Culture period, dates back some 4,000 years. A Canalino burial, estimated to be 3,000 years old, unearthed in recent years, shows the skeleton, evidently of some chief or important personage, resting on the immense shoulder blade of a whale. The whalebone bier is profusely and quite artistically decorated with designs of colored seashells.

The exhibits of the three cultures of the period of existence of these southern coast aboriginals show clearly their progress in the manufacture of utensils and weapons from exclusive stone, to stone and bone, and later to stone, bone, seashell utensils, and steatite tools and weapons, the latter widely used by the last Canalinos existing in their native state. Probably nowhere in the State has been found such a rich store of relics of the aboriginal way of life.





David Banks Rogers spent several years making an exhaustive investigation of the life, habits and history of the Santa Barbara Indians and recovered most of the visual evidence mentioned above. He agreed with early-day authorities that the Canalinos were much further advanced towards civilization than any of the other California tribes. In his splendid published, detailed account of their mode of living he quotes the Spaniard's description of their boats as they existed in 1776 when they were characterized as thoroughly seaworthy, being made from planks lashed together, caulked with tar, 20 feet in length with a beam of four feet. At a very much earlier date, or on December 2, 1602, to be exact, referring to these same people, Sebastian Vizcaino writes, "Five Indians in another canoe so well constructed that since Noah's Ark, a finer and lighter vessel has not been seen. Four men rowed."

Father Crespi, in the chronicle of the Portola expedition of 1769, states that the Canalinos had regular cemeteries for burying their dead, with separate areas for the males and females. Individual graves were marked with wooden poles from which hung ornaments belonging to the dead owners.

In further describing the advancement of the Canalinos, Rogers verifies the early accounts of the artistically contrived mother of pearl decorative spangles and pendants which he recovered in large numbers from their burial grounds and also the prevalent use among the later-day members of this tribe of individual eating bowls. Rogers and his assistants also recovered hundreds of the Canalinos' fishhooks fashioned from bone and shell, some very like those of the present day. The highly colored shell from which some of these were fashioned acted as a fish lure as well as a hook.

The life of these Canalinos was entirely communal. There was no lack of abundance of foods, acorns, roots, berries, game and fish. Each village was ruled over by a captain or chief whose word was law, and whose sovereignty was a virtual dictatorship. This village captain was accorded special privileges such as a plurality of wives, possession of special property in the way of furs, weapons and implements, and was dressed in special clothing.

Although all California tribes knew the use of poison in its raw state or distilled from various plants, poisoned arrows were used only by the northern and mountain tribes, whose use of the bow and arrow in securing their food was more prevalent. Arrow points were poisoned by having a rattlesnake strike at a deer liver and eject his venom in it. The liver was allowed to putrify and the arrowheads were dipped into the resultant poisoned mass.





## Indian Care of Land

Since their very existence depended upon the lands around them, the Indians guarded their hunting and fishing grounds jealously. Tribal wars, periodically carried on, were usually caused by trespass of one tribe or sub-tribe on the lands of another. There was no intentional abuse of lands by Indians and this is mentioned because of a confirmed belief in many quarters that an Indian custom existed of burning over lands to produce better crops of food-bearing plants, or to facilitate the hunting of game.

In an extensive study lasting over 35 years, L. A. Barrett, for many years chief of Land Management and land use in the California Region of the United States Forest Service, was unable to unearth any instance of Indians in their native state ever deliberately burning wild lands except occasionally in certain marshy areas where squaws burned off the tules to facilitate harvesting of the bulbs or roots used for food.

The California climate, producing as it does a heavy luxuriant natural cover, during the dry season creates an outdoor fire hazard probably second to none anywhere on the globe. The Indian realized this intense inflammability as was later evidenced during white aggression when Indians sometimes fired woods and wild lands as an act of warfare or from motives of revenge.

Indians, it is true, used fire freely in their daily existence. They had used it for cooking and warmth from time immemorial, as is evidenced by blackened and fire-scarred utensils and the walls of caves. They used it for burning down trees for canoe-making and other purposes and for hollowing out their dugout boats. Some tribes, often known by the general appellation of "Digger Indians", are reputed by early explorers to have kindled fires under pine trees to secure the nuts stored in orifices by woodpeckers, and it is generally conceded that Indians in general burned off areas closely adjacent to their villages to destroy cover which would hide the approach of enemies.

It is past belief, however, that Indians deliberately burned forest or natural cover to facilitate game hunting. This might be done, and in fact was done, in later years by white hunters armed with long range rifles. However, such a practice would hamper rather than help the Indian hunter since Indians killed their game either with bow and arrows or with weapons



requiring still closer contact with the animal which was being carefully stalked through the natural vegetative cover. From the very method the Indian used to secure his game it is just as absurd to believe that an aboriginal hunter would start fires to facilitate hunting as to subscribe to the time-honored belief than an ostrich buries his head in the sand to conceal himself from his pursuers.

It must be conceded that the Indian, though robbed of his lands by our white race according to the rule of the survival of the fittest, nevertheless, gave the land better care than did his white conqueror. Decimated, driven hither and yon; later educated and made over to conform to white man's ways; the Indian invariably returned to the land of his birth, or perhaps to a land of forced adoption, and in some way managed to eke out an existence to which the land always contributed.

During the past few decades with the awakening of public consciousness, coupled with the splendid work of the United States Indian Service, often little known or appreciated, the California Indian is fast taking his place in the economic structure of rural California. His numbers are increasing, and, living in a happy medium of the ways of the white man and his own ancestors his health and social status is showing a rapid improvement. Young men of the native Indian races have served with our armed forces in all parts of the world, equal in intelligence, courage, and physique to their white brothers-in-arms.

Despised though the aboriginal inhabitants might have been, and relegated as they were to the lowest social caste in the Commonwealth, their use of California lands had a decided influence on later Spanish and Mexican occupancy, an influence which in time reached ahead to mould to a certain extent land use practices of our own time.





## CHAPTER IV WHITE EXPLORERS AND SPANISH RULE

### Spanish Exploration and Conquest

Until well into the Sixteenth century the Papal sovereignty at Rome was the virtual ruling power of the Christian civilized world, secular as well as religious. The powerful Spanish empire circled the globe and its conquistadores, ranging the known world, carried with equal facility the Cross as well as the Sword, conquests being in the nature of spiritual as well as military occupancy. It is readily understandable that the Spanish monarchs, who, in addition to their wealth and power, were also staunch supporters of the Church, stood high with the Papal authority.

It follows quite naturally, therefore, immediately after the discovery of the New World -- financed also as it was by Spanish royal funds -- that Pope Alexander VI in 1493 issued his famous bull, or written authority, to the King of Spain conferring on him title to all the new lands beyond the sea. The wording of this famous document granted broad powers of land ownership as it read, "We give, grant and assign forever to you and to your heirs and successors, Kings of Castile and Leon, all and singular the aforesaid countries and islands thus unknown and hitherto discovered by your envoys and to be discovered hereafter, together with all their dominions, cities, camps, places and towns as well as all rights, jurisdictions and appurtenances of the same whereon they may be found."

Armed with this formidable document, probably the biggest title deed the world has ever known, the Spanish monarchy lost little time in sending expeditions to the New World. The title to all lands being vested in the Spanish rulers, every expedition was one of conquest, and the aim of the Spanish buccaneers and men-at-arms was to carry back to their royal masters as much portable wealth as possible from the lands they conquered -- invariably by force -- this usually being in the form of gold or other precious materials of small bulk.

While English colonists or settlers by their nature turned to agricultural pursuits and independent freedom of living, the entire course of Spanish colonization is marked by an insatiable desire for gold -- wealth for the coffers of their rulers. This demanded military aggression instead of development and the pursuits of peace and free living. It is somewhat of an anomaly that the Spanish conquerors of California, after stripping the nations to the south of all their portable gold, never more than vaguely guessed at the fabulous hoards of wealth of



this same metal over which their armed warriors virtually trod. Probably the greatest and almost only blessing the Spanish conquerors of the New World left in their wake was the spiritual influence on native tribes and their own colonists as they took possession of the lands in the name of their king and blessed those lands with the cross of their church.

The first white man to set eyes on California was Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portugese navigator employed by the King of Spain, who anchored his two small ships in San Diego Bay September 28, 1542. He is said to have made a cursory exploration close to shore as far north as Santa Barbara where he again landed and planted the Spanish flag, immediately setting sail and proceeding as far north as Monterey Bay without again touching shore. Cabrillo died of wounds at San Miguel Island the following year and his second in command, Bartolme Ferrelo, continued the expedition, sailing north to a point approximately off Rogue River, Oregon, although his expedition sighted land only opposite Point Reyes.

The next Spanish leader to see California's shores was evidently Fray Andres Urdaneta who, in 1565 while serving under Miguel Legaspi in the Phillipines, sailed in a small ship from there to the California coast, landing briefly on San Miguel Island at the north end of the Santa Barbara Channel and establishing a port of call for future trade between the Phillipines and Mexico. This voyage consumed 129 days, and for almost two hundred years this point was used as a stopping place for Spanish galleons sailing between Asia and North America.

Official Spain, with her hands full elsewhere in her world-wide dominions, was slow in her explorations of the land called "California". For many years after the Spanish had been established in Mexico they believed that "Baja", or Lower California, that 750-mile peninsula extending south, was an island, and that the land to the north was a continuation thereof. Exploration of California might have gone even more slowly had not the Spaniards been spurred on by persistent legends of the rich territory to the north, and particularly of the seven fabulously rich golden cities, ruled over by a chieftain called El Dorado, lying somewhere in that northern land.

In 1540 Hernandez de Cortez, an active leader in Mexican conquest and colonization, decided to find this fabled land of gold and enlisted to serve with him the intrepid Francisco Vasquez Coronado, whose name is so closely associated with the early exploration of the American Southwest. Cortez and his associates met with many adventures and suffered almost incredible hardships in opening up new Spanish territory lying





to the east and south of California. They discovered and named New Mexico in 1541 but never reached California, Cortez himself never found the fabled Seven Cities with their reputed piles of gold. Coronado did however, proving their existence when he discovered the rather elaborate adobe pueblos built and maintained by the natives of New Mexico.

Sometime after the large scale explorations of Cortez and Coronado on the southwestern plains, Sir Francis Drake in the first English circumnavigation of the globe, landed at Drake's Bay on the northern California Coast from his ship, the Golden Hind. The date is given as June 17, 1579. He remained for over a month, resting his crew, securing provisions and water, and repairing his ship. Hoisting the English flag, he took possession of the new land in the name of the Queen of England, christening it New Albion. Drake, whose real mission was to prey on Spanish and Portugese shipping and not one of exploration, did not seem to be too favorably impressed with California but did secure considerable information of the country -- for England, not for Spain. It is doubtful if the Spaniards even knew for years after that Drake had landed in Alta California, although they were quite concerned over his depredations on their ships and the English threat to their Oriental trade.

In 1587, Pedro de Unamumo, following instructions from his superiors in Mexico, landed from a Pacific voyage at Morro Bay. Like most Spanish leaders of his day and age, he managed to get into a fight with the Indians but Spain's knowledge of California was little enhanced by Unamumo's few days' stay on California's shore.

Still aware of the fact that immense rich territory lay to the north of Baja California, under the orders of the Mexican Viceroy Luis de Valasco, the next Spanish exploration trip to California was led by Sebastian Rodrigues Cermeno who sailed his 200-ton ship, the San Augustin, from Manila in 1595 and sighted California land at Cape Mendocino. Unable to find a safe harborage he sailed south and dropped anchor in Drake's Bay, which he named the Harbor of San Francisco. Caught in a storm, his ship was wrecked, but he set forth for Mexico in a small launch. In spite of the importunities of his crew he proceeded in a leisurely manner and secured for Spain a very creditable map of the entire coast line from Drake's Bay to Baja California. The account of the hardships suffered by the 70 men of his crew, as they lived off the country on their coastwise trip in an open boat, is almost incredible. Because of the fact that he lost his ship and cargo Cermeno received very little official credit for the best map Spanish authorities had yet obtained of the California Coast.





The next Spanish explorer was neither soldier nor sailor, but a plain merchant of more than ordinary ability, selected by the Mexican viceroy, Conde de Monterey, to head a California expedition of three ships. This explorer, Sebastian Vizcaino, was to turn over to the King of Spain one-fifth of all the gold, silver, pearls, or other precious substances secured on the trip. Since the Spanish were still quite ignorant of Alta California and now fairly well acquainted with the great peninsula, Baja California, Vizcaino was warned under the pain of death against entering the great southern gulf. After several false starts his expedition of three ships and two hundred men got under way and explored the main coast pretty thoroughly from San Diego to Cape Mendocino. The party suffered great hardships and although adding to the Spanish knowledge of California's coastal waters and shorelands, the expedition was a rank failure as a financial venture.

Vizcaino's report of Upper California riches was not backed by visual evidence although he did mention rich pearling grounds and probable rich deposits of gold in the distant mountains -- a guess which came true over two centuries later. On this venture, completed in 1603, Vizcaino probably insured the future of Spanish Monterey when he thoroughly charted that bay. He was later accused of gross exaggeration and his chief officer was hanged by the succeeding Mexican viceroy for falsification of reports on the riches of the new country.

Spain had her hands pretty full in the management of Mexico and the establishment of settlements on lands to the south and east so that while the California land continued to loom as a big asset in the Spanish dreams of empire, over a century and a half elapsed following Vizcaino's venture before any further explorations were made of that little known land of fabled wealth, now definitely called "Upper" or "Alta" California. Spanish vessels in the Orient trade still stopped at the Coast Islands of Southern California, but no contacts were made with the mainland.

The Cross transcended the Sword in bringing about the first actual colonization in California. The Jesuit missionaries, claiming three quarters of a million native converts in other parts of Spanish America, with the assistance of the military, succeeded during the first part of the 18th century in establishing missions among the turbulent tribes of Baja California.

Early in 1769 a considerable colonizing expedition, well equipped, started by land and sea for Alta California. Jose Galvez, with Pedro Fages, who afterwards played a major part in California history, was in charge of the sea expedition and



Gaspar de Portola and Fernandez Rivera were in charge of the land parties. With 126 men left of the original party of 300 possession of California in the name of Spain was formally taken at San Diego July 1, 1769 with joint military and religious ceremonies. A few days later, or on July 16, Father Junipero Serra, founder of the California Missions, established the San Diego Mission, destined to become the first of the chain of 21 Franciscan Missions which played such an important part in California's earliest land development.

Portola's expedition later continued overland on its way north and on June 3, 1770 the Mission San Carlos (Carmel) was established on the Monterey Coast. The dedication ceremonies were held under the same oak tree beneath which the first Christian religious services ever held in California had been conducted by Vizcaino's party 150 years previously. At the same time the Presidio of Monterey was established and Pedro Fages was installed as provisional Governor of the new California.

The Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay were discovered by Portola's party, and in the diary of Father Juan Crespi, chronicler of the expedition, appears the entry, "It is a very large and fine harbor, such that not only all the navy of our Catholic Majesty, but those of all Europe could take shelter in it." However, upon Juan Ortega, one of Portola's captains, reporting that the way further north was blocked by the Golden Gate, Portola's reaction was merely one of disappointment, and he apparently placed little value on this important discovery. In fact, he noted in his own journal that nothing was discovered on that date.

Historians have never been able to figure out why Drake, Cermeño, or Vizcaino, to say nothing of the captains of Spanish ships sailing close by for centuries, never discovered the Golden Gate nor the great harbor beyond. Portola's own party, when the discovery was made, was actually en route to Drake's Bay, which by that time was pretty well known to them.

### Spain's Colony

The news of the establishment of missions and settlements in California was celebrated in Mexico by special religious services and public rejoicing, but members of the expeditions themselves were greatly disappointed in the new land. Food supplies were short and agricultural development had not yet gotten under way. However, the reports of Father Serra to the authorities, coupled with the threat of possible English conquest and the establishment of foreign colonies and military







outposts to the north, kept interest in the new venture alive, and more elaborate colonization plans were made by the Spanish-Mexican authorities.

Progress was slow, and by 1773 the few white residents of California were still only the leather-jacketed soldiers and the Franciscan Friars who accompanied Portola's expedition. The work of the latter, led by Father Serra, together with that of Pedro Fages, energetic first Governor, did much to spread the slow-moving propaganda of those days among the Mexicans. Political pressure changed the picture on the religious side and the Jesuit missionaries, pioneers and martyrs to their faith as they had been the world over, after providing the impetus for the settlement of California, left the field to Father Serra and the Franciscan Order.

Always the route of Spanish exploration and conquest by water, and later by land, had been along the sea coast until 1773 when Captain Juan Baptista de Anza, a Spanish colonial soldier of more than ordinary courage and ability, blazed a new route from Sonora, Mexico, up through the Spanish settlements in New Mexico, west through Arizona, across the Colorado Desert and Colorado River and on through the San Jacinto Valley, past the site of the present city of Riverside to the San Gabriel Mission, east of Los Angeles. Fray Pedro Font, historian of the expedition, left the most detailed description of the Southern California of that time in existence today. He wrote of the forests, the beautiful fertile valleys, of the clear-cut picture of the seven hundred-odd miles traversed by the expedition.

To his immediate chief, Viceroy Antonio Bucareli, Anza himself wrote a glowing description of Southern California, embodying the prediction, "I expect great advantage to the service of both Majesties and the glory of your Excellency." Anza's glowing reports greatly pleased the Viceroy of Mexico who promoted Anza in rank. Bucarelli became the first California booster and the modern historian, John Walton Caughey, phrases it capably when he states, "Even a bare enumeration of Bucareli's services to California must be an extended one" and speaking of the near abandonment of Spanish colonization of California Caughey continues, "Because of his contributions to the faltering colony, Bucareli has been acclaimed 'the greatest hero who ever appeared in California history.'"

Coincidental with the establishment of the Missions, the presidial towns of Monterey, San Diego, San Francisco (Yerba



Buena), and Santa Barbara were established, all garrisoned by Spanish troops. San Jose, Branciforte (Santa Cruz) and Los Angeles, the other settlements initiated about the same period in the Spanish history of California, were always pueblos or civic communities although it was natural, of course, that civilian settlement also established itself around the presidios. The Spaniards, always good soldiers and explorers, even by devoting their best efforts to the business, were not successful colonizers. San Francisco was settled by people so poor that they were a burden on the military forces occupying the Presidio there, and their every want down to cooking utensils and the last piece of decorative ribbon had to be furnished at the expense of the Spanish crown.

The settlers in the new land, missionaries, soldiers and civilians alike, suffered much hardship. The two presidios and five missions established by the end of 1773 were still dependent for their existence upon supplies from the mother colony of Mexico. At times, to ward off starvation, the white residents of Alta California were forced to revert to the custom of earlier explorers of falling back on horseflesh or subsisting on the native food of the Indians. In late 1772, Governor Fages, himself the chief hunter, organized a bear hunt of three months' duration, and soldiers, padres, and Indian converts alike subsisted for a considerable period on grizzly bear meat. It will thus be seen that in contrast to the Indian mode of living off the land, for several years the first California white residents were forced to depend mainly upon imported foods for their existence.

Supplies were generally sent from Mexico to San Diego by ship and from that point to the northern settlements by pack train, a long trek of well over 500 miles to Monterey alone, but necessary in order to serve the settlements along the route. Friendly Viceroy Bucareli used every effort to relieve the situation in the new land, but during the winter of 1773-74 near starvation again overtook the new province and the Spanish populace was forced to fall back on the charity of the Indians and subsist mainly on native foods and seeds.

Although it seems strange to us now, living conditions in California continued to be exceedingly precarious for many years after Spanish occupation. Until the agricultural production of the Missions got into its stride, even the highest ranking officials were sometimes short on the barest necessities of life. As late as 1792 ordinary comforts were conspicuously absent at the residence of the commandant of the port of San Francisco. It is recorded that George Vancouver,





English globe trotter of that time, commenting on the bareness of his existence, left several thousand dollars worth of utensils, tools and implements, including kitchenware, with that San Francisco official.

The followers of the Cross were more farseeing than the military, and the missionaries accompanying Portola's expedition brought with them from Mexico a wide variety of seeds and two hundred head of breeding cattle, the actual nucleus of California agriculture. With the wide area over which they were scattered and the fact that the padres had to fabricate the very equipment with which to cultivate the soil, not to mention that they had to first convert the Indian, then teach him to work, the growth of Mission production was at first slow. It is a tribute to the Missions, however, that famine conditions never existed again after that bad winter of 1773-74.

At this time two strong characters, Governor Pedro Fages and Father Junipero Serra, were each endeavoring to guide the helm of the ship of state in the new California. The interests of the military and the newly-founded Missions clashed, and Father Serra was instrumental in having Fages removed. Fages was replaced as Governor by Fernando Rivera. Rivera's administration proved unsatisfactory to Viceroy Bucareli so he in turn was replaced by the forceful Felipe de Neve to whom was entrusted guidance of the destinies of both Baja and Alta California, with the accredited capital of both colonies afterwards being established at Monterey.

In spite of his apparent mal-administration, Rivera brought with him fifty-one new colonists of all ages to California, locating them at San Diego. However, in July 1781, a second party of settlers conducted by Rivera to California was massacred to the last man by Yuma Indians when it had barely reached California soil by way of the Anza land trail. This massacre, attributed by historians to the incompetence and arrogance of Rivera, who failed to placate the Indians with gifts as did his predecessor, de Anza, had a markedly depressive effect on California's colonization. Interest in the new colony was kept alive in Spanish-Mexican officialdom only by the unflagging interest of Bucareli, backed by his industrious and intelligent executive, Neve, and the untiring efforts of Father Serra and his followers.

In November 1777, Governor Neve planted a settlement at San Jose near the Mission of that name, California's first civilian city or pueblo. Later the Pueblo of Los Angeles was established, known then as Reina de los Angeles. Both pueblos were founded





on a definite colonization plan. Each settler was to receive a house lot and four fields of 200 varas square each, ( a total of approximately  $28\frac{1}{2}$  acres), livestock, seed and implements. The land was free but the cost of the implements and seed was to be repaid to the Government from the products of the land. Each adult settler was to receive \$116.50 annually for the first two years, and \$60.00 per annum for the next three. The colonist was obligated to sell his products to the military forces. Settlers were exempted from all tithes and taxes for these five years and emoluments such as wood and water were free. Ever mindful of the military obligation to the Spanish Empire, each adult resident was obliged to hold himself and his horse in readiness at all times for military service.

In order that one colonist could not monopolize the wealth of his neighbors, no settler was allowed to have more than fifty animals of any kind. Fairly strict rules were drawn up covering construction and care of irrigation ditches and the slaughter of livestock. The small farms of the settlers were to be located within the limits of the pueblo, which included four square leagues, or approximately 17,500 acres. A plaza, or central square, and streets were laid out and land was reserved for churches and other public buildings. These Spanish California pueblos bore a striking similarity to the communal villages and farms in existence in Russia today.

It was some time after the founding of the San Jose colony that the pueblo of Reina de los Angeles was under way, the latter being officially inaugurated on September 4, 1781. The new Southern California municipality got off to a bad start. Small-pox broke out among the new settlers before they could be established on their land allotments and the final number of original colonists dwindled to nine families, comprising forty-six people of all ages. Only two of the number were of pure Spanish blood, the balance being a mixture of Indian, negro and Spanish, with the Indian strain predominating. Not one of these original Los Angeles settlers could read or write. One of the two pure-blooded Spanish settlers, with his Indian wife and children, was soon banished from the pueblo because of his unsatisfactory character and sent, of all places, to the presidial town of Santa Barbara, considered then, as later, the elite town of the entire California colony.

The populations of Los Angeles and San Jose were augmented from time to time by discharged soldiers, sailors deserting their ships, and drifting adventurers. While on the whole a rather dissolute, shiftless lot, considered far beneath the military population socially, these pioneer settlers gave a fairly good



account of themselves. By 1785 the population of both pueblos was estimated at 175 persons each and by 1800 this number had increased to 100 families, or about 550 people in both pueblos. In that year also it is recorded that the settlers in both places raised 9,000 bushels of grain and owned 16,500 cattle and horses, and 1,000 sheep. It would appear, therefore, that the law governing the numerical limit of livestock ownership was not too strictly enforced. The Spanish-Mexican officials kept faith with the colonists, and titles to their lands were confirmed after five years' of residence.

The third pueblo was not established until 1797. Located near the Santa Cruz Mission, and called Branciforte, in honor of the Mexican viceroy of that time, this settlement was a failure from the start. Although installed by Governor Diego de Borica with great fanfare, its lazy dissolute inhabitants, called plain ruffians by contemporary writers, contributed nothing to California's agricultural development. The pueblo lands were later absorbed by the Santa Cruz Mission. In the same year over a score of destitute convicts were dumped by the Mexican authorities on the presidial town of Monterey to augment the civilian population of that place. While not vicious criminals, being merely of the improvident type, they made poor settlers. This shipment set a precedent, perhaps, since small numbers of convicts of the same class continued to be sent from Mexico to California towns up to 1834.

Spanish settlers of the better class were slow in coming to California. By the end of the eighteenth century it was fully recognized that the combination of climate and soil fertility in the new California was unsurpassed and that an almost endless variety of crops could be produced. Agricultural production, however, was strictly limited by the lack of markets, and therefore a comparatively effortless form of farming came into being in livestock production. Animal husbandry was a simple affair in those days. Cattle and horses brought in by the first explorers and later parties had by this time greatly multiplied so that many thousands grazed the hills and valleys, domesticated, semi-domesticated, and even large numbers of animals which had reverted to a wild state. To carry on this type of agricultural effort required almost unlimited land holdings, but since as late as 1800 the entire white population of California was estimated to be not much over 1,000 -- soldiers, missionaries and settlers, there was public land for free use in an unlimited amount available to all.

Few of the large ranchos which later characterized early California farming came into prosperous existence during the Spanish regime, since the ruling monarchy kept a tight hand on







land ownership. Outside of the lands granted in trust to the Missions and the small holdings within the pueblos, only twenty actual land grants were made to individuals during the Spanish rule of California. Among these were the grants made by local governors to the Nietos, Verdugos, Dominguez, Tapias, and Zunigas families and later ratified by the higher authorities. The biggest land grant ever made in California was that to Manuel Nieto by Governor Fages in 1784. This grant contained 300,000 acres and extended from the Santa Ana River to the San Gabriel River and from the ocean to the mountains. It was later considerably reduced by action of the Church through the civil authorities.

### Missions

If Spanish officialdom, represented by the military and civil authorities was slow to action, the progress of the missions in land use and development was decidedly the reverse. The work of the Franciscan priests in the establishment of the chain of twenty-one California missions, extending from San Diego on the south to Sonoma on the north, has gone down in history as one of the most magnificent pieces of new land utilization, coupled with religious and rural industrial development, the world has ever seen. Father Junipero Serra, who came to California with Portola's original expedition, fired with religious zeal for the conversion of the heathen and the advancement of his Church and Order, was the first leader of these Spanish missionaries. Already well advanced in years on his arrival in the new land and permanently crippled en route as well, his life was one of devotion and sacrifice, as his sandal-shod feet trod the rocky trails between the missions he had established from San Diego to Monterey. It was eminently fitting that almost a century and a half later Father Junipero Serra was unanimously selected for a place in the National Hall of Fame.

On the death of Serra in 1784, Father Fermin Francisco de Lasuen, almost equally zealous and a very capable leader, became head of the California Missions. Somewhat less sacrificing, perhaps, he was nevertheless possessed of great executive ability and had a deep love for the Indians, whom he regarded in the light of erring children. Certainly he welded the erstwhile savages into a wonderful rural working force. To Father Lasuen the world owes the birth of a distinct new style of architecture known far and wide as the "California Mission" type. The names of other mission leaders such as Font, Crespi, Garces, Diego, Duran and Altimiran stand out in bold relief on the pages of California history.



The Franciscan friars, all men of high education, and usually located two to a single mission, were not only preachers and teachers, but farmers, architects, engineers, and artisans as well, their temporal duties being carried on with as much zeal as their spiritual. They were also sometimes martyrs, when the turbulent nature of the Indians caused them to break through the restraints of discipline and in rebellion against a regulated existence lay violent hands on their benefactors. The pages of mission history bristle with these uprisings, some of which involved clashes with drunken white soldiers. Many were settled without bloodshed by the patience and tact of the padres, but at times the tame Indians, joining with their wild brethren in mission parlance called "Gentiles", cruelly murdered their priestly leaders and often wrecked long years of work of their own hands.

The last Mission dedication was that of Solano at Sonoma, on July 4, 1823. Extending along the sea coast the Missions were usually not more than a maximum of 30 miles or one day's march apart. The ascetic faith of the padres generally forbade any other means of travel than afoot. The exceptions to this type of location were the Soledad and San Miguel Missions which, founded on October 9, 1791 and June 25, 1797, respectively, were each approximately 30 miles from tidewater, as the crow flies.

#### Mission Construction

Although lands granted by the Spanish Crown to the Franciscan Order were considered as being held in trust for the Indians and were therefore in effect Government lands, this factor did not deter the missionaries from pursuing a program of permanent construction and development of the lands with which they were endowed. Coincidental with the construction of the churches and other mission buildings, pastoral pursuits were prosecuted with zeal and energy.

The materials for the massive Mission churches and the less pretentious buildings surrounding them all came from the soil on which they were built. Outside of the very casual labor of the soldiers, all construction work was done by the Indians under the direction of the friars. Not only were the missionaries compelled to use the raw materials at hand to construct their edifices, but were often forced to make the very tools and implements with which to carry on the work.

Hand-hewn heavy timbers were brought from the nearest available forest area, often miles away, on the shoulders of naked Indians.





It is related that some of the massive beams used in the construction of church edifices, because of the sacred use to which they were to be put, were never allowed to touch the ground on their long journey. Walls of the buildings were made of irregular stones embedded in cement or adobe. Cement and lime were often procured by crushing seashells to powder. Bricks and tile were manufactured from the native clay mixed with wild oat straw. These so-called "adobe" bricks, made from the native clay were universally used, and soon became a standard construction material in California.

Attached to the central church building at each mission were the residences of the priests, guest rooms and offices. Utility buildings such as carpenter shops, blacksmith shops, weaving establishments, tanneries, and wineries, were housed in separate structures. Invariably there was an Indian rancheria, or village, with individual family residences. Unmarried females were housed in separate quarters which, under the religious discipline in vogue, were kept locked at night. Stout adobe walls surrounded the structures forming a virtual prison for the Indians when need arose, as well as furnishing a protection against wandering wild tribes and predatory whites. The method of treatment of the Indians can be likened to a strictly disciplined parochial industrial school.

Lacking efficient building equipment, the Mission padres often resorted to ingenious schemes to carry on their construction work. It is said that the curved, red tiles, universally used to cover the roofs, were often molded on the thigh of an Indian neophyte. At the San Antonio Mission in Monterey County, which later became a center of agricultural wealth, to construct the towering nave of the church, the common story is that the priests resorted to the expedient of building a gigantic, firmly-packed earth mound of the desired size and contour. On this primitive model they built their church and when the exterior walls and roof had sufficiently hardened removed the dirt mold from the interior. At San Juan Capistrano, most magnificent of the California missions, the stone church was ninety by one hundred feet and the seven domes were eighty feet high. The walls of this edifice were five feet thick.

Although trading and assistance to each other was common among the Missions, each one was an individual, self-contained community. The priests were virtual magnates, and while individual cases of cruel despotism cropped up occasionally, the local rule was usually kindly, benevolent, and just. The Indians, assured of regular meals, eventually accepted the routine of regular hours of labor and since there were always several hundred of the native workers at each mission over which to spread the work load, the duties imposed by the friars were not too arduous.





## Mission Agriculture and Industry

Besides livestock and staple cereals, many of the familiar California crops of today were introduced by the missionaries and used by them for the communal existence or sold to the presidios or settlers. The royal government, and later the Mexican Republic, were constantly in debt to the missions for supplies furnished. Weaving early became a part of the industry of each mission, as Indian women with centuries of basket making behind them, took readily to this occupation. Cloth and blankets were woven for local use and for the military forces. In addition to wool, cotton and flax were both produced and processed by many of the missions. Leather goods were also quite extensively manufactured in later years. Two thousand hides were tanned by the Santa Clara Mission alone in the year 1792. The San Francisco (Dolores) Mission had twenty looms in constant operation in 1818. In 1798 this same mission, with over 1200 neophytes in residence, manufactured and delivered tile to the nearby presidio at \$2.00 per thousand.

The San Gabriel Mission in its heyday cut, sawed, and fitted timber for a ship of the brigantine class. This mission at one time had around 5,000 Indians in residence and was also the home of 50 to 175 whites and mixed bloods working on the surrounding lands. In 1798 a water power mill was erected at Mission San Luis Obispo. As Indian manpower came into demand on the ranchos, water power machinery became an innovation at several missions and a water power mill was constructed at San Gabriel by Father Zalvides in 1810. Wine-making commenced at the missions as early as 1784, and their wines and brandies were in great demand in later years. It is a tribute to the control the padres had over the Indians, whose racial fondness for intoxicants is proverbial, that mission Indians were rarely known to be intoxicated.

Gravity irrigation projects were one of the first concerns at each of the missions. Fenced gardens and orchards were planted within the main site. Field crops were generally grown without irrigation and flocks and herds were tended on the open range by herders and vaqueros.

Almost every mission eventually had a fairly extensive irrigation system supplementing the domestic water supply. A large masonry dam built by the padres at Santa Barbara on the creek named for the mission still stands almost intact as a tribute to these engineer-priests. At the Santa Clara Mission, where a wide range of fruits was produced, an irrigation canal one



and one-half miles long, nine feet wide and five feet deep was constructed by the neophytes in 1827. It is said there were 1,464 workers of both sexes on this project. While these water development projects were decidedly minor affairs in comparison with those of the present day, they loom large when it is considered that all work was performed by the hands of Indian laborers.

That figures on the wealth and agricultural production of the Missions were often greatly exaggerated by writers of that time is pointed out by the statement of Fr. Zephirin Engelhardt, modern historian and capable writer of mission history. He cites the instance of the French traveller and author, Eugen Mofras, who visited the Santa Ynez (Ines) Mission in 1842 and in his later writings practically doubled the figures on the Indian population and number of livestock. That the missions were wealthy for that day and time, in terms of land and livestock, there is no doubt. Although a certain amount of gold, silver and specie was collected into the missions coffers there was no incentive for the accumulation of this form of wealth, since the missionaries could not have spent cash had they possessed it.

While San Juan Capistrano is conceded to have been the most magnificent of the missions, others such as San Gabriel, San Luis Rey, San Luis Obispo, and San Jose equalled, if not exceeded, it in agricultural production. San Gabriel, in 1821 raised the largest grain crop ever produced in one year by a single mission, with a harvest of 29,400 bushels. According to the old records, that same year this mission had 2,333 fruit trees, and 163,679 vines in four vineyards. San Gabriel's ownership of livestock, shortly before secularization, was 25,725 cattle, 16,000 sheep and 500 horses.

At the San Jose Mission in the second decade of the 19th century it was not unusual to see one hundred Indian plowmen in a field at one time. Working in pairs, one man guided the oxen while the other held the primitive plow which was merely a crooked tree limb shod with iron and painfully tore up the soil for planting. In its most productive year the San Jose Mission had 2,000 Indians in residence and besides cultivators, herders and vaqueros, employed 50 weavers, 20 tanners, 30 shoe-makers, 40 masons, 20 carpenters, and other Indian artisans. It held the record of consistently producing the heaviest field crops of any mission in the chain.

The California missions at one time controlled 1,500,000 acres of land, and considering this vast acreage, their production





of field crops was not large. Although many production records were lost, those which are available show that in the year 1810 fourteen missions harvested approximately 44,000 bushels of grain, wheat, barley, corn, and beans, with wheat predominating.

All the missions in existence at that time together owned approximately 40,000 head of cattle and horses and 50,000 sheep. Shortly before they were secularized in 1834, the missions had about 200,000 head of cattle, 190,000 head of sheep, 2100 horses and mules, and hogs to the number of around 2,000. In 1810 the 19 missions then established produced 83,000 bushels of grain, owned 141,000 cattle and horses and 157,000 head of sheep and goats. In 1820, records for eleven of the largest missions show a grain production of 22,657 bushels of wheat, 3,185 bushels of barley, and 12,560 bushels of corn.

There is a wide divergency in Mission crop reports for that  $1\frac{1}{2}$  year. In wheat production, harvest time returns ranged from absolute crop failures and less than the amount planted to a return of 24-fold for the San Gabriel. Santa Barbara reaped only the same amount of barley as was planted, while Soledad had a yield of almost seventeen-fold of the same crop. San Gabriel realized 356 bushels of corn for each bushel planted and San Luis Rey harvested this crop on the ratio of 281 to 1. This same mission, with a maximum population of over 2800 Indian converts from which to draw a labor supply, and a constant white population of twenty to fifty whites of all ages, through a long period of years consistently produced an average annual crop of 12,660 bushels of gain.

The Santa Ynez Mission from 1806 to 1832 harvested a total of 117,571 bushels of various grains, an annual average of 4,354 bushels. The yield of corn at the Santa Barbara Mission in 1820 was only twenty-five fold. Since land volume meant nothing in Mission Days, seldom was any record made of production on the basis of area planted.

The mission records are replete with tales of drouth, floods, and crop failures. Wild animals took a heavy toll of livestock. In spite of the almost unlimited area of unbroken, virgin land available to the Mission Fathers, once in a while in the reports there crept in an ominous note as some foresighted missionary envisioned improper use of the mission lands. Possibly as a protest against overcropping or one-crop production, Father Zalvides of the San Gabriel Mission in 1816 formally reported that much of the grain lands of the mission were "exhausted".



Besides their latchstrings being permanently open to all comers, the California missions in their best days cared for some 30,000 Indians, in itself involving a heavy food production program. There were still approximately 21,000 entirely dependent upon them in 1834. The Indians were always great eaters, but never finicky about their fare so long as it was plentiful and filling. Records indicate that at the Santa Clara Mission in 1792 twenty-four bullocks were killed every Saturday for local consumption. At the Buenaventura the weekly quota of beef was forty animals.

### Santa Barbara Mission

Santa Barbara, one of the largest, best organized and most famous of the missions probably affords a fair sample of the gradual development and daily life of them all. It will be recalled that the Indians of that section were generally more intelligent and advanced than those of most other California tribes. At this point there was also a well-manned presidio and a pueblo which ranked high both as a trading point and in the intelligence of its people. The location was also fairly close to the middle of the mission chain.

The Santa Barbara Mission was founded on December 4, 1786. A few days later  $12\frac{1}{2}$  bushels of wheat and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  almudes (pecks) of beans were planted, and a total of 64 bushels of various grains by the spring of 1787. The returns for the first year were only 200 bushels of wheat, 67 bushels of corn and three-quarters of a bushel of beans. At the end of 1787 the mission padres counted 80 cattle, 27 sheep, 87 goats and 32 horses as their livestock holdings.

The Indian population of the mission at the end of 1788 was 307 people, or 88 families who had embraced the Christian faith. The priests reported that the increase of livestock in 1795-96 was small due to "serious damage by bears, leopards, (probably mountain lions), wolves and coyotes." In 1794 with a planting of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  fanegas (250 lbs.) of corn and 98 fanegas (9,800 lbs.) of wheat another poor crop year was recorded with a yield of only 15 fanegas of corn and 400 fanegas of wheat.

By 1799 the church was fully completed and there were 864 Indian converts of both sexes and all ages. In addition to farming operations the Indians evidently engaged in sea otter hunting since the records indicate the receipt of \$1,624.00 from Mexico for the sale of otter skins. Between 1793 and 1800 supplies sold to the military forces at the presidio brought in a revenue of \$5,179.00. Another source of revenue at that time was money or barter goods derived from hiring out





Indian labor to the soldiers or settlers. The standard rate of pay for Indian labor was nineteen cents per day and one almud (peck) of corn a week. The wages of these Indian hirelings was placed in the common mission fund.

Reports of that time reveal that the Indian neophytes were extremely well fed, three regular meals a day being the rule. The first meal consisted of "atole" (mush or gruel), two pounds for each person. The midday meal was "pozole", a thick soup of meat, meal and vegetables, with an allowance of four pounds for each Indian. The evening meal was again atole, with a two-pound limit, making a total of eight pounds of food per day for each individual. The padres record that this was a sufficient for even the Indian appetites, with some left-overs used to feed the cattle.

One priest of that time gives vent to his ideas of the voracious appetites of the Indians with the following:

"The meals of the Indians cannot be counted, because it may be said that for them the entire day is one continuous meal. Even during the night should they awaken from sleep, they are wont to reach out for something to eat. Their meals at the Mission consist of meat, corn, peas, beans, etc."

He adds, "They have everything in common; and all receive the same assistance."

Every six months each man and boy received a new pair of breeches and every seven months a new shirt. Cattle herders were furnished leggins, boots and blanket ponchos. Women made clothing for themselves and for the males from cloth woven on the mission looms. By 1810 the manufacture of coarse wool blankets had developed into a considerable industry at this mission. Besides food products, the friars sold these blankets and cloth to the soldiers at prices specifically set by the central government.

A fixed daily routine was rigidly enforced. All residents of the mission assembled at stated times for daily worship. At the morning assembly, one hour after sunrise, tasks were assigned to the neophytes for the day. No unnecessary work was performed on Sundays or religious holidays. Indians were allowed occasional days off to go fishing or for other devices of their own and as much as two weeks leave was granted to converts from distant rancherias to visit their old homes. These absences were allowed only up to one-fifth the number of the total Indian workers.



Both sexes were punished for running away and services of the soldiers were utilized at times to apprehend runaway Indians. Imprisonment in stocks and lashings were imposed for serious offenses, but generally speaking, the local priests, capitalizing on the devotion of their charges, were able to win erring Indians by reason and persuasion.

In 1802 thirty-one new adobe residences were added to the Indian rancheria at the mission; in 1803, forty-eight; and thirty-seven in 1804. By 1805 the padres had constructed 234 of these individual homes for the neophyte population. Building construction was a constant activity during the early years of this mission, and in 1802 the friars record the addition of 1,870 square feet of floor space to the main buildings, construction of a tannery and a rather elaborate building for housing the residence and offices of the mayordomo. Granaries and storage buildings were also built about this time. Between 1807 and 1818 still more adobe neophyte residences were constructed, houses for guards, a large water storage reservoir, and a rather imposing fountain and laboratory. A century and a quarter later this fountain still stands in front of the Santa Barbara Mission as sound as the day it was built.

In 1804 the mission reported the possession of 11,500 sheep, 3,500 black cattle, 540 mares and foals, and 238 tame horses. Products of the mission farm surplus were readily disposed of to the military forces as well as to the settlers, whose numbers were slowly increasing.

Father Ramon Olbes, writing from the Santa Barbara Mission, on December 13, 1813 gives his opinion of the secular population of California at that time in the following words:

"The people in this province known as the 'gente de rason', (whites) are so lazy and indolent that they know nothing more than how to ride horseback. Labor of any kind they regard as dishonorable. They are of the opinion that only the Indians ought to work, wherefore they solicit the services of the Indians for even the most necessary things for their maintenance such as cooking, washing, taking care of the babies, etc. Generally, the missionary fathers let them have the Indians for work."

When in 1818 the freebooters of Buenos Aires planted their flag on California soil and armed invasion seemed imminent, Father Martinez organized a military force of two hundred Indians at the Santa Barbara Mission. Part of the company were mounted and their weapons consisted of bows and arrows and knives. While the warriors were never called upon to repel foreign invasion, with their primitive weapons they later fought a





pitched battle with 45 soldiers from the nearby presidio. The brief war was occasioned by the murder of several Indians by the local soldiers, and it might be said that the Indians came off victors in the fight. After they had retired from the battlefield to the nearby mountains the soldiers wrecked the rancheria and greatly slowed up for some time both the agricultural and religious development at the mission.

By the end of 1823 the Santa Barbara Mission included 962 neophytes, with two hundred Indians constantly employed in connection with the mission plant. In common with all California missions it suffered greatly during the period of secularization and its friars were rather badly treated by the hostile Mexican civil authorities. When actual secularization took place in 1834 the mission inventory showed property assets of \$113,960 and liabilities of only \$1,000, plus 3,400 cattle, 2,264 sheep, 25 goats, 340 horses and 70 mules. It had through the years also greatly contributed to the Santa Ynez Mission, 30 miles to the north.

Of the immense area over which the Santa Barbara Missions once ruled, the final grant of land made to the mission proper by the U. S. Land Commission in 1858 and confirmed by the Supreme Court, was 37.83 acres. At the same time, however, a college rancho grant of 35,450 acres given in Santa Barbara County, and one of 4,157 acres in San Luis Obispo County by the same authority, did, perhaps, somewhat compensate the Roman Catholic Church in California for its immense contribution through the Franciscan Missions to the early development of the State.

#### Progress and Foreign Encroachment

While the Missions were making consistent progress in land use and development, other settlement moved slowly all during the Spanish domination of California. However, cattle ranchos had been established on the few large land grants actually made to soldier citizens who had rendered signal service to the empire and squatters established themselves on other lands, usually close to the missions, presidios and pueblos. These Spanish pioneers founded the pastoral life of which almost countless volumes have been written, covering the colorful, adventurous existence of the early California cattle barons.

Spain was decidedly concerned over the threatened gestures of other nations towards the lands on the Pacific Coast. English, American and Russian interests were feeling their way towards



the California prize. The Hudson Bay men from the north made tentative forays southward into the California province in the interests of the British fur trade. American ships touched at California ports to receive an indifferent and sometimes actual hostile welcome. Well founded rumours that American mountain men, trapping for the large fur companies of St. Louis and New York, were casting longing eyes towards the Coast Region, alarmed first the Spanish and later the Mexican authorities.

It was not until November, 1826, however, that the first of these, Jedediah Smith, reached San Gabriel Mission by way of Cajon Pass with his half-starved, ragged party. In the unfailing hospitality of the missions the friars there gave these men a cordial welcome, entertained and fed them for six weeks, clothed them and provided the party with fresh horses and travelling supplies. The civil authorities were not so friendly, and Smith and his party were ordered to leave California, albeit under safe conduct passports. Intrigued by his impressions of the new land, Smith complied with these orders very leisurely, taking time first for a casual exploration trip through the Southern San Joaquin Valley. After several attempts and much hardship and suffering, Smith's party finally crossed the Sierra Nevada in May, 1827, the first white men so far as history records, to traverse the great mountain range.

Returning from the annual rendezvous of the fur traders and trappers in the Snake country, Smith is found the same year again entering California. This time he did not meet with such a cordial reception, either from the missions or from the civil authorities, and was thrown in jail as an armed invader. Eventually set free, during 1828 he and his party leisurely trapped their way along the west slopes of the Sierras almost the entire length of their northern half, cleaning up a tidy fortune in beaver pelts at the mouth of the Feather River and other points along the way. Smith's party comprised the first Americans to traverse California well inland for almost the entire length of the State.

A well-grounded fear of foreign conquest came when in 1818 Hippolyte de Bouchard, a Frenchman commanding a Buenos Aires privateer, made an armed attack on the Spanish provincial capital at Monterey. Bouchard's men not only looted the city and partially destroyed it by fire, but carried their depredations to the surrounding farming communities, in their drunken orgies pillaging and laying waste gardens and orchards, and burning farm buildings. Governor Sola, the Spanish-Mexican governor, had meanwhile evacuated Monterey and retreated with his forces and the civilian population to the Salinas Valley.





After a week's sojourn in that section Bouchard's force sailed south, planting the flag of Buenos Aires again on California soil near the San Juan Capistrano Mission, which they also pillaged before sailing southward to their home port. This piratical raid, for it was little more, had the effect of rousing the lethargy of the authorities in Mexico, and California's population was increased by two hundred the next year on the arrival at the various presidios of this number of soldiers from the southern colony. History relates that half of this number, comprising the cavalry detachment, were good men, but that the one hundred infantrymen were nothing more than an undisciplined gang of vicious drunkards and thieves.

A more serious threat to Spanish-American control in California had come ten years earlier when a trapping expedition of the Russian American Fur Company, ranging south from the Aleutian Islands in search of fresh foodstuffs for their Sitka colony, established themselves at Bodega Bay. For the next few years, the Russians, with their native Aleutian hunters, mustered a considerable force along the north central California coast and either took themselves or purchased from local residents many thousands of sea otter skins and other furs.

The Russians secured quite a firm foothold in California when in 1812 they built Fort Ross in what is now Sonoma county, and established there a considerable settlement some miles inland from their sea base at Bodega Bay. Although their coastal fur trade brought them considerable revenue, their settlement as an agricultural venture was an almost complete failure. The Russian settlers planted a rather large area in grain, raised cattle and other livestock, and at one time milked a herd of 200 cows, besides maintaining a considerable garden and orchard.

Ostensibly, this colony was established and maintained by the Russians to produce food supplies for their Alaskan trappers. They carried on farming operations in this area until 1841 when their livestock, buildings and equipment were purchased complete by John A. Sutter, founder of New Helvetia. At that time they left California for good. Besides buildings and equipment, the Russian accumulations included 2,000 cattle, 1,000 sheep, and 1,170 horses and mules. Some of the officers stationed at Fort Ross during the period of Russian occupation were of high rank and attainment and this bloodless occupation of California soil -- never with the full sanction of the ruling authorities -- added considerable romance and color to an already glamorous period of California history.



It was early in 1822 that the officials at Monterey learned of the successful revolt of the Mexican revolutionists under Augustin Iturbide. They lost no time in pledging allegiance to the new government. When something over a year later the Mexican Republic was established and Iturbide banished, they pledged their loyalty to the new regime with equal facility. By a freak of chance, and perhaps presaging later American dominance, an American ship brought to Governor Sola and the California government officials the first pattern of the flag which replaced the Spanish royal standard in Mexico.

With the advent of the Republic of Mexico the governorship of California was conferred on Luis Antonio Arguello, who replaced Sola as the chief official of California's provincial government. During the next almost quarter of a century there was little difference in the way of life for the cattle kings except that their numbers increased and their livestock wealth greatly multiplied.

The sixty-odd years of Spanish colonization in California did little more than found the large land ownership system typical of feudal days in Europe under which the men who actually worked the land were nothing more than serfs whose labor could be legally bought, sold, or exploited in any way by their overlords. The Franciscan Missions did, however, demonstrate the agricultural possibilities of California lands and paved the way for the later tremendous agricultural development of the State. All forms of agricultural and industrial effort were dominated by the missions, and it is small wonder that their period of existence is often referred to by historians as the era of Mission Rule.





## CHAPTER V MEXICAN RULE - AMERICAN CONQUEST 1823-1847

### Limitless Lands

With the advent of Mexican independence came more liberal land laws, and the number of ranchos in California soon increased under the new rule. During the Mexican regime a total of almost 800 land grants were made, most of them involving large acreages. It cannot be said that Mexican administrators generally had any greater love for the land than their predecessors under Spanish rule. They were usually broken down politicians or soldiers, not husbandmen like the missionaries, and California representation in the Mexican legislature was often a mere gesture.

Isolated and often belittled by Mexicans proper, Californians felt much resentment against the parent government for their neglect of the northern part of the republic. The vacillating laws of Mexico promulgated for their guidance were more honored in the breach than the observance by California residents. At an early date they began calling themselves "Californios", rather than Mexicans. Almost a score of revolutions against the central Mexican Government occurred in California during the years of Mexican rule.

One of the earliest Mexican land laws was that giving a qualified settler the right to take up eleven square leagues of land - over 48,000 acres. The law as defined stipulated that one league was to be irrigable soil, four leagues dependent upon rainfall, and six leagues grazing land. The land was to be tax free for five years or until final title was granted on evidence of good faith on the part of the settler. Not much capital was needed for a rancho and a start in the livestock business. The filing fee was only \$12.00, and the settler could usually borrow his initial start in cattle.

Since the livestock ranged practically at will on open lands, a very small initial investment in ranch improvements was necessary. The settler was required to be a subject of the Republic of Mexico and a Roman Catholic in religion. Americans and other foreigners in California during the Mexican period, in order to qualify as landowners, became both. Many of them married native women and attained prominence among the "Rancheros", as these rancho owners were termed.

In the vast new region there was almost limitless areas of virgin land and now, a century later, it is difficult to realize the low value the Californios placed on their lands,



especially in view of the deep attachment they had for them. As an illustration of this attitude on the part of Mexican Californians there is related the story of George C. Yount, American California pioneer, who came to the State in the early part of the 19th century. Betaking himself to Mariano Vallejo, land baron of the Sonoma country, Yount asked him for employment. Vallejo asked Yount what work he could perform that could not be done by native Californians, and after debating for some time the American replied that he could make shingles and roof houses with them. This sort of building material was unknown to Vallejo, but after some explanation he gave Yount the contract to go ahead, with the result that some time later General Vallejo was intensely proud of the new shingled roofs on his dwelling and other buildings. He asked Yount how he could recompense him for his services and the American replied that he would like a few heifers and half a league of land in Napa Valley. "How much land, did you say?" asked Vallejo. "Half a league", replied Yount. "You can't have half a league", countered Vallejo testily. "We don't give half leagues here. You can have four leagues." This seemed like too much of an area of land to the American pioneer who then ventured the statement that he would take one league. "You can have two leagues and nothing less", Vallejo replied, and so the deal was settled on that basis.

Land was so plentiful and cheap that boundaries of the various grants were poorly defined and surveys vague and uncertain, a factor which was to involve these lands in litigation for several decades after American occupation. Close to 800 land grants, most of them of immense size, were made between 1823 and 1846. An arroyo, a stream, a chain of hills, or some more indefinite boundary line was named in these individual grants, often identified only by the word "certain", if the particular landmark did not happen to possess a name at the time the grant was made. When a grant was applied for, an official, often the alcalde, or local magistrate, who usually had no knowledge whatever of surveying, met the applicant on the ground.

The first point to be decided upon was where the headquarters of the new rancho was to be located. This decision reached, a stake was driven to mark the central point of the immense farm comprising that particular Mexican homestead. A line was then run so many leagues in each of the four cardinal directions, north, south, east and west, in the form of a cross and the outside boundaries of the grant left more or less to take care of themselves, or else very loosely defined.

Sometimes actual field surveying was dispensed with entirely and the boundaries of the new rancho merely outlined by topographic features on the official grant papers in the alcalde's





office. One part of the boundary description of a large rancho reads, "from a willow tree on the seashore to the borders of an inlet." One surveyor evidently found the whitening skull of a dead animal a rather outstanding mark against the darker background when it was written into the grant papers as "the head of a steer." Other boundary marks were described in the old papers as "an oak on a hill", or "a point between two hills", names of hills not given. One locator evidently did not have very permanent landmarks in mind when he used as a line marker, "a brush hut."

Some idea of the inaccuracies of land measurement of those days is gained from the fact that in the traditional California method of rural living of that time which virtually prohibited foot travel, the universal riata, or lasso, was used as a measuring standard. Usually 150 varas ( $136\frac{1}{2}$  feet) in length, a stake was attached to each end of the riata. One stake being planted in the ground, a vaquero seized the other stake and set off at full gallop thrusting this one in the ground when the end of the riata had been reached. His companion then seized the rear stake and galloped again the length of the riata, in turn marking the next length of this primitive surveyor's chain with the stake on his end. If some obstacle to horseback travel, such as an arroyo blocked the course of the surveyors, the distance across such obstacle was casually estimated. This mode of land measurement at least covered a lot of distance in a day's survey.

### Pastoral California

Undoubtedly the most colorful period of California history was the days of the large ranchos, centering mostly around the Mexican period of occupation. Cattle and horses both multiplied with remarkable rapidity and cattle furnished almost every actual need of the pioneer inhabitants. This era produced probably the best riders the world has ever known and every expert horseman was equally expert with the riata, or lasso, made from rawhide, and an inseparable part of each rider's equipment. California children learned to ride as early as they learned to walk and almost from the cradle to the grave man and horse were inseparable. Many of the women were expert riders too.

Wild horses on the California ranges increased almost as rapidly as cattle, and in years of feed shortage many thousands were killed to conserve pasturage. In years of drouth immense numbers of cattle were slaughtered also.



Descendants of the Indians, who had never seen a horse or cow prior to the coming of the Spaniards, developed a strange affinity for the horse and many of them became expert riders and vaqueros. Californians of all ages seldom walked and in their prime were able to travel long distances on horseback without fatigue. To many of them a period of thirty-six hours constantly in the saddle was no particular hardship, and using relays of horses, unbroken rides of 150 miles were not at all uncommon.

It is said of Bonifacio Lopez of San Diego, when well along in years and weighing 300 pounds, that he was wont to ride his horse at full speed down a steep, breakneck trail. Horses ridden by the rancheros knew no medium gait, -- their either moved at a walk or at full speed. They were trained to break into a spectacular gallop from a standing start and stop with abrupt suddenness. Young riders practiced constantly until they became expert with their riatas and at picking a handkerchief or other small object from the ground while riding their horses at a dead run.

It was facing sudden and violent death to travel over cattle range afoot, since to the wild cattle an unmounted man was a curiosity and an alien figure on their landscape. Their ruler was the rider with the swinging lariat. A tired horse was unsaddled and turned loose, with a short trailing riata around his neck, to facilitate catching him up later. Having caught a fresh horse the rider transferred his equipment to the new animal which in turn when exhausted was turned loose with his rawhide halter attached. The only wheeled vehicle in use in the early days was a clumsy, lumbering, springless cart drawn by a yoke of oxen. It moved at a creakingly slow pace over the landscape, its wheels often being merely solid circular segments cut from a tree trunk.

The large California rancho was similar in many respects to the old English manor or the ante-bellum days plantation of the American South. The rancheros themselves were an easy-going, pleasure-loving people, who developed a class consciousness and pride of race somewhat out of proportion to their rather brief occupancy of California lands. They were generous and kindly, clannish as to family and race, and quick to anger over anything threatening their women, their lands, or their horses. Somewhat vain, they were, however, unduly trusting and scrupulously honest, their word being as good as their bond. Governor Broica, as early as 1800, boasted that any man could safely leave his purse in any public place in the province of Alta California. This inherent honesty and trustfulness later proved the undoing of the average Mexican ranchero when population pressure broke up their immense land and cattle holdings.





The hospitality of these Mexican-Californians is as traditional as their horsemanship and the doors of the ranchos were always wide open to wayfarers. In the early pastoral days a traveller could journey from San Francisco to San Diego without one cent of cost. At the ranchos he found food and lodging for both man and beast. If he needed a fresh horse along the way, he could catch up the first one seen, turning his own animal loose to be recovered or exchanged at some future date. Many a poor Mexican in later days met death as a horse thief because of innocently following this custom of his people.

If a traveller of those days was hungry he was welcome to slaughter a beef and take all the meat he needed, provided he followed the universal unwritten law of the time of leaving the hide of the animal, the brand conspicuously displayed, where the owner could recover it. The hospitality of the missions went still further and the traveller, Catholic or Protestant, could secure free board and lodging as long as he pleased. He was furnished with transportation and guide service and unobtrusively given not only provisions for his onward travel, but if such were available, a supply of specie money as well in case such might be needed on the next lap of his journey.

Since almost unlimited Indian labor, mainly mission-trained, was available, this class performed all the manual work. Field hands and house servants were drawn from this source and became part of the rancho establishment, much in the same manner as did the negroes of the South. Sometimes the number of retainers on one large rancho ran into the hundreds. These Indian retainers were paid little or no wages outside of the keep of themselves and their progeny. However, we find that standard farm wages for the little white help used compares favorably to that paid the same class of employees in the first part of the 20th century. The going wages for white farm hands or vaqueros in the first decades of the 19th century was \$25.00 per month and found, with \$3.00 per day for white laborers and a higher rate for skilled artisans.

Like the missions, most of the ranchos had their haciendas, or areas on which grain, fruit or garden crops were produced. In the Southern Coastal Region timber was scarce or difficult to obtain, so in order to protect growing crops against roving livestock, and later to guard against thieves, fences were often built by using the skulls of cattle. These bleached heads, with their curving horns, topping a low adobe wall, constituted a formidable barrier. There was never any scarcity of this article as the skulls could be secured by the thousands from the nearest "matanza" or slaughter ground.



The California rancho population lived mainly on beef, eating it morning, noon and night. Mutton was used to a very limited extent and hogs scarcely at all. The main functions of the comparatively small number of swine raised seems to have been to produce fat for soap-making. The favorite meat was that along the ribs of the animal, and riders, in their very frequent camps away from headquarters, provided their subsistence by simply butchering a fat calf or young steer, removing this portion of the meat and roasting it in the coals of their camp fire. A sharp skinning knife was an integral part of each rider's equipment, and the hide of an animal was always carefully saved. The main value of cattle was in hides and tallow, and outside of the little trade with the presidios and the small amount needed by trading ships, there was little market for meat.

There was little money in circulation among the cattlemen, but cattle hides of any size were universally priced at \$2.00 each, and in the barter system of the time were in effect the coin of the realm, and legal tender for all obligations. Standard prices were pretty well adhered to and a Government list of values established in 1788 carried through for many years. Some of the current prices around 1790 were \$3 to \$9 per head for horses; sheep, 75 cents to \$2 per head; cows, \$4 each; hogs, \$1 to \$4 each; oxen, \$5 per head; and wheat, \$2 per fanega (100#).

Prices showed little change by 1840 and included fat cows at \$5 per head; sheep, \$2 each; brandy, \$50 per barrel; hogs \$6 each; milch cows, \$8 per head and wheat \$3 per fanego, although beaver skins, a scarce article by that date, were listed at \$3 per pound. The universal standard price of dried cattle hides at \$2 each and tallow at \$2 per arroba (25#) remained quite constant.

California rancheros paid no taxes on land or crops, but taxes were imposed on pleasures and luxuries. Government revenues were derived from taxes imposed on the manufacture and sale of wine and brandy; charges were made for licenses to operate cantinas, or restaurants and drinking places in the towns; taxes were imposed on bullfights; gambling of all kinds was taxed, and special paid government permits were required for dances and similar amusements. Even dances and entertainments held in private homes were taxed. Economically, therefore, the rancheros lived practically free of any sort of rural taxation.

As would be natural in a country where livestock roamed at will on the open range, laws, written and unwritten, regarding livestock brands to identify the stock of individual owners were





particularly strict. Such laws were on the California statute books as far back as 1780. Not only was the well known and conspicuous hip brand used, supplemented by the earmark, but the "venta", or sale brand was also one of the legal requirements. This venta, used to indicate the sale of the animal, also constituted a visual receipt of the purchase price to the vendor and purchaser. To qualify for the possession of an individual brand mark, the applicant was required to be the owner of at least 150 head of horned cattle. The most serious charges against the earlier cattle barons was their failure to round up and keep their livestock branded.

Naturally, the annual rodeos were great affairs. Many thousands of cattle were gathered at central points, and the current crop of calves of various owners were branded with their respective markings. The pleasure-loving dispositions of the Californios led them to make these rodeos a social event as well as a business affair. Planned for months in advance, the local rodeo, lasting at least three days, brought forth many exhibits of expert horsemanship and roping on a competitive basis and much dancing and feasting, as families from the different surrounding ranchos assembled for the annual event.

Scarcely second in importance to the rodeo, although a much more humdrum business affair, was the annual slaughter of beef. On the matanzas, located at central points, cattle were driven in and killed by the thousands, mainly for their hides and tallow. A vaquero, ranging alongside an animal, killed by a blow of a heavy knife delivered at the nape of the neck. The butchering vaqueros were followed by a crew of skinners who deftly dressed and removed the hide from the animal without the meat touching the ground. The skinners in turn were followed by crews of Indians, mainly women, who cut the choicest parts of the meat from the carcass for curing and drying and collected the fat for tallow. Both the edible meat saved and the parts used for tallow making were transported by dragging or carrying in the green hide, which was itself afterwards dried for local use or trade.

Rawhide and a thousand and one uses in early California rancho life. It was made into bedsprings, chair bottoms, hinges, and saddle skirts. Fastenings in building construction and many other functions were performed by this useful article. Even the famous riatas were made from rawhide, and a supply of the material was never far from the hand of the vaquero or ranch hand.

The tallow was rendered in large pots or kettles and poured in its melted state into cowhides, sewn together in their natural



shape to form containers in which the tallow hardened for handling and shipment. This tallow-filled cowskin was called a "bota". During the middle and latter part of California's pastoral era some measure of trade developed in dried or jerked beef, bound in bales, or in beef preserved by pickling.

The wide-horned, long-legged, thin-bodied, rangy cattle of the Mexicans were much inferior to the types, such as Herefords, introduced with American occupation or the larger cattle later brought in by the Mormons. Their average production would not run much over fifty pounds of dried or pickled beef, if the meat were saved, and one hundred pounds of tallow, per animal.

### American-Mexicans

Many of the Americans who joined the ranks of the cattle barons in the pre-American days, and who as a class, were more shrewd and business-like than their Mexican associates, took a prominent part in the development of California, particularly in the southern section of the State. Some of them were trading ship captains who left their commands to settle ashore in the new land. Some were traders employed by Eastern firms who elected to become Mexican citizens and live beneath the sunny skies of California. Yet others were those who came purposely as fortune-seekers and colonists, either overland or by sea.

Among those whose names stand out prominently in Mexican-California history can be mentioned Thomas O. Larkin, Monterey merchant and first U. S. consul to the California province, and William Goodwin Dana, uncle of the famous author, Richard Henry Dana, and proprietor of the Rancho Nipomo. Other pioneers were William E. P. Hartnell and William A. Gale, resident agents of ships engaged in the hide and tallow trade, both of whom located on California soil in 1822. Thomas Doak and Daniel Call were carpenters who settled in the new land back in 1816. Joseph Chapman's life was spared when in 1818 he was captured by the Mexican authorities as one of Bouchard's raiders. He became a useful citizen, building several of the grist mills of early California.

Johy Gilroy was marooned from a ship away back in 1814 and remained to become a naturalized Californian. Captain John R. Cooper, Alfred Robinson, Henry Delano Fitch, J. J. Warner, Dr. John Marsh, the intrepid Major John Bidwell and the great John A. Sutter were also among the vanguard of Americans who became citizens of the Mexican Republic. Many of them married into prominent Mexican families. Dana became the father of twenty-one children by his Mexican wife. Hartnell, also marrying into one of the early California families, was blessed with twenty-one sons and nine daughters.





What John A. Sutter was to northern California, New England-bred Abel Stearns was to the south. After living three years in Mexico he came to California in 1829, immediately became a naturalized Mexican citizen and proceeded to grow up with the country. Merchant, miller, peace officer and civic leader, his foremost role was as landowner and cattleman. When past forty years of age, he married fourteen year old Dona Arcadia Bandini, daughter of one of the foremost Spanish-Californian families and was soon known throughout the entire province as Don Abel. A much better business man than his contemporary, Sutter of the north, he became almost fabulously rich, with holdings extending from the San Bernardino mountains to the sea and embracing at one time over 200,000 acres. His home and central rancho was Los Almanitos for which, shortly after American occupation, he refused an offer of \$300,000 made by General John C. Fremont.

Stearns built an extensive trading post at San Pedro and erected some of the first large buildings in the city of Los Angeles proper. Almost ruined in the drouth years of 1863-64 he recovered from the blow and on his death in 1871 left his widow ranch holdings aggregating over 125,000 acres, besides tremendous assets in livestock and other personal properties. Time and again Stearns came to the financial rescue of native cattle and landowners with whom he was associated through the long years of his life in California; at times also, he realized large profits from the financial failure of some one of their number.

### Fur Trading

In their jealousy of possible usurpation of territory, Spanish restraint of trade almost impoverished the California province and illegal trading with foreign merchants began in the closing years of the 18th century. Smuggling was carried on more or less with the sanction of the authorities, themselves denied by their own government luxuries, and sometimes necessities, which the foreign ships were anxious to exchange for the products of the land.

There was some little trade in furs with Manila between 1787 and 1790, on the basis of a government-supervised project, during which period nearly 10,000 pelts, mostly sea otter, were taken along the California coast and shipped to that port. This venture cost the Spanish government around \$88,000 so, deciding that it was a losing game, it abandoned the fur trade to private trappers and traders. As a matter of fact, the fur trade, which brought some of the first white pioneers to California, other than Spanish-speaking people, was over as



a profitable enterprise of any proportions some years prior to American occupation. Only about 3,000 beaver skins were sold through regular channels of trade annually during the years 1840-41-42.

It is estimated that 18,000 otter skins were shipped to China in 1800, with a steadily diminishing number each year for the next twenty years. One American schooner took from the Farallone Islands 33,740 fur seal skins in 1810, a total of 21,153 in 1811 and 18,509 in 1812, a grand total of 73,402 pelts taken by a seven-man crew in a period of three years. In 1840 this animal had been practically exterminated by the inroads of Russian hunters and North Pacific Indians, poaching in California waters. Old records indicate that in 1847 a few sea otter skins sold for as high as \$60 each.

The fur seal existed in large numbers along the California coast, particularly around the Farrallone Islands. To supply the demands of Oriental markets, a considerable industry developed in these furs which were taken both by American and foreign trappers, but this industry contributed nothing to California's development. Like the sea otter, this animal was also practically extinct by 1820.

#### Hide and Tallow Trade

The fur ships, operating also near the California mainland, naturally dropped into California harbors and were the forerunners of the vessels of the famous hide and tallow trade of later years. Sometimes they met with a hostile reception and on more than occasion were fired upon or their cargoes seized by the Spanish military forces at one or another of their fortified ports. Nevertheless, a surreptitious trade developed with merchant ships of different nationalities for two decades before Mexican independence, after which such trading was legalized by the new government.

Under the Mexican laws each ship, upon payment of port duties to the authorities at Monterey of a fee ranging from \$2,000 to \$7,000, was authorized to trade up and down the California coast until their cargoes of trade goods had been exchanged for a shipload of hides and tallow and sometimes small amounts of other agricultural products of the ranchos or missions.

The New England manufacturing centers needed leather for shoe manufacturing and other purposes, and tallow for candle and soap-making, so it is not surprising that the famous Boston clipper ships should gradually almost monopolize this trade. Richard Henry Dana, in his sea classic, "Two Years Before the





Mast, gave the world a detailed account from the viewpoint of an outsider and ordinary seaman, not only of the hide and tallow trade itself, but an intimate sketch of the daily life and customs of the early Californians. As a matter of fact, however, British ships, ranging the seas in search of raw materials for their own manufacturing centers, actually established the hide and tallow trade.

Through the years of the great California cattle-raising era, the ships of the British, as well as of the South American Republics, Scandinavian, French, and German, participated in a smaller way in the trade of manufactured goods for the products of the California lands. The main trading points were San Diego, San Pedro, Santa Barbara, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco, although the sailing ships often loaded and traded off the coast near some large rancho, such as Refugio, north of Santa Barbara, when weather conditions permitted and a safe anchorage was afforded.

The ships were small by present day standards, but often the loading process occupied more than a year's time, as the vessels plied up and down the coast to secure a full cargo for their home ports. The native vaqueros were frequently slipshod in their skinning methods necessitating the ships' crews working the hides over, cleaning and curing them before loading, a slow process and dependent largely upon the vagaries of wind and weather. When thoroughly dry, the skins were compressed into the ship's holds by means of jackscrews and 30,000 to 45,000 hides were packed into these comparatively small vessels. When a ship left California shores for her long return journey around Cape Horn she had disposed of her last item of manufactured goods to the local ranchos and was loaded to the gunwales, every inch of cargo space being utilized. This hide and tallow trade made fortunes for the ship owners and masters as well as bringing in a needed revenue in the form of daily necessities and luxuries to the California agriculturists.

The arrival of a trading ship was an exciting event both to the rural population and the residents of the presidial and pueblo towns. A veritable travelling department store, the ship's stock of barter goods covered a wide range. Silks, velvets, gaily-colored cloths dear to the hearts of the rancho population; farming implements, weapons, household articles; jewelry, books, pictures, and even boots and leather articles, manufactured from the hides produced on their own lands, were offered to the Californios at exorbitant prices. Men and women alike from the families of the cattle barons, obsequiously rowed out to the ships by the sailors, grandly selected from the ship's barter goods whatever their fancies dictated, without regard to cost.





The historian Bancroft mentions the fact that a rural customer, going on board one of these Yankee trading vessels with a \$100 credit in hides, could easily carry away the goods purchased in an ordinary pocket handkerchief. Often the rancheros were in debt to trading vessels and were forced to slaughter larger numbers of their cattle to settle their debt to the Yankee skipper. With the easy-going, improvident manner of living of the rancheros, however, unlimited cattle could be produced on their vast land holdings, and their credit with the shipmasters remained unimpaired.

While cattle hides and tallow formed the bulk of the exports, as time went on and competition among the trading ships grew keener, dried or pickled beef, brandy, soap, and grains were sometimes added to the outgoing cargoes. Surplus and wild horses were killed by the thousands by the California cattle kings, sometimes by the simple expedient of driving them in gathered herds over a steep precipice. The hides were usually stripped from these animals also, but seldom exported. Tanned into a rough leather they were used locally to make sacks for grain containers and similar uses.

The heyday of the hide and tallow trade and the height of prosperity under Mexican rule in California was reached in the yearly period coming partially in 1845 and 1846 when exports for a 12-month period included 80,000 hides, 1,500,000 pounds of tallow, soap to the value of \$10,000, 1,000 barrels of wine and brandy and 200 ounces of gold. The death blow to the hide and tallow trade came with the gold rush days which created a local market for cattle, and prices undreamed of by the rancheros up to that time.

#### Wild Life and Tree Growth

Almost without exception the early day Spanish explorers mention the abundance of game animals and nearly all speak of the great number of bears, particularly the large grizzlies. The cattlemen of the California pastoral age did not go in much for trapping or shooting, but waged war on predatory animals in their own way. The huge grizzly bear was one of their worst enemies and a formidable antagonist, but from their customary position on a fast horse they faced him without fear. With their deadly, swinging riatas, they counted it royal sport to capture this animal alive, truss him up and conveying him to some central point, use him in their favorite sport of bullfighting. In these contests the bear was matched with one of the vicious range bulls in a fight to the death. The bull was usually more than a match for his fierce opponent.





Grizzly bears were numerous in the California hills and skillful bear hunters were a welcome addition to the force employed on the large ranchos. George Nidever, a Tennessee hunter who drifted into California in 1833, is reputed to have killed two hundred of these big animals. Five years before his death at Santa Barbara in 1883, Nidever at 78 years of age put three rifle balls in quick succession into an inch square space at a distance of sixty yards.

Animals of the deer species were unusually plentiful. William Heath Davis, American pioneer, tells of seeing as many as 3,000 elk on Mare Island at one time during the years 1840 to 1843. These animals were sometimes hunted by the native vaqueros for their hides and tallow and just as in contest with the grizzly, the Californians disdained the use of firearms in bagging their game. The elk were lassoed by the swinging of riatas of the vaqueros and by skillful horsemanship often made to travel under their own power to a central place of slaughter.

Where necessary as a supplement to the versatile adobe, local hand hewn timber was used in the construction of missions and in buildings on the ranchos and at the pueblos, but nothing of consequence developed in the way of lumber or woodworking industries during the Spanish and Mexican regimes. The Russians in the Fort Ross vicinity to a limited extent engaged in lumbering, selling their hand manufactured redwood planks and beams to the native Californians, and even shipping some of their products to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands). Isaac Graham established a sawmill in Zayante Creek in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1842 and two Frenchmen, Peter Sansevain and Chas. Rousiller, built a sawmill near the pueblo of Santa Cruz in 1844. A sawmill was erected at San Gabriel in 1846.

That Mexico realized the value of the native tree growth is evidenced by a law in existence under which a special permit was required to cut timber for profit. The export of timber by private parties was forbidden by law and trespassers were required to pay for the value of timber cut, as appraised by two experts. Shipmasters constantly required timber for spars and similar uses and were wont to help themselves from the nearest available supply. We find in May, 1834, that the San Francisco pueblo lodged a complaint with the assembly at Monterey to the effect that "foreigners were destroying the forests" in that section.

A contract appears in the early records under which an American named Garner contracted with the port authorities for



the delivery of piles for a new pier at Monterey. It appears that the contract was completed, the price of the piles, delivered at the pier site, being \$4.00 each. One million barrel staves were included in the exports for 1846.

### New Types of Colonists

In 1834, Jose Maria Hjar, for a short time governor and then director of colonization, at government expense, brought a party of over two hundred of a new type of colonist to California from Mexico. Located first at Monterey, this group consisted mainly of artisans of the better class, and painters, teachers, musicians and artists. The talents of the professional class were somewhat wasted in the raw frontier settlements, and many of them returned to Mexico. The majority of those who remained established themselves in the agricultural settlements founded the previous year by Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in the Sonoma Valley.

### Mission Secularization

When the Spanish government underwrote the establishment of the Franciscan California missions it was with the understanding that the mission lands were merely being held in trust for the Indians, which made them still virtually Crown lands. Under the efficient management of the Franciscan friars the missions greatly prospered and became agriculturally wealthy. When the Mexicans won their independence and California became a Mexican province, the priests, as a rule, still remained loyal to the Spanish crown. A great deal of bitterness developed between the missions and secular authorities, engendered probably to a great extent by the increasing wealth and power of the former.

The tangled skein of laws marking the actual secularization of the Missions in the years 1833 to 1836 eventually stripped them of their lands. Of their immense land holdings there remained after secularization a little over 800 acres, approximately only the lands on which the mission buildings were located. The move has been characterized since as nothing more or less than legalized robbery, but the cattle barons, to whom these lands were given under Mexican grants, were, as a class, in turn practically robbed of the same lands by incoming American settlers a couple of decades later.

Regardless of how one looks on the ethics of the procedure of mission secularization, it must be admitted that around 21,000 Indians dependent upon the missions for subsistence were deprived not only of the means of livelihood, but what was much





worse, of a disciplined, ordered existence. Theoretically, at least, on secularization the great mission holdings of livestock and stores of food were distributed among the Indians. Adult children as they were, incapable without leadership of any form of regulated living, these riches were soon dissipated. It is said that the Indians of the San Carlos Mission, who actually did get one-third of the livestock and grain supplies, lived luxuriously while they lasted, but had within a year eaten up, or gambled away, all the supplies thus bestowed upon them.

Fortunate, indeed, were those Indians who were able to attach themselves to some rancho as regular employees, for great numbers of them drifted to the pueblos where hunger, disease and drunkenness rapidly decimated their ranks. Some few went back to their aboriginal habits of living, weakened rather than strengthened by several generations of regimented, dependent habits of life. Large numbers of them became victims of a peonage system under which they were actually bought and sold as farm hands and in some cases treated little better than the farm animals. Drunkards, petty thieves, and sometimes murderers, during American pioneer days they were one of California's most serious rural problems.

Pio Pico, who later served as the last Mexican governor of California, has been characterized by the Franciscan friars as the implacable foe of the missions during the secularization period. Certainly he seems to have had little control of his undisciplined soldiers when he allowed them under the pretext of legal process of occupation to actually loot and pillage the missions plants, often including physical mistreatment of the priests and Indian neophytes. Father Zephyrin Engelhardt, mission historian, writing in 1897, quotes an earlier authority who states:

"During the rule of the mission robbers .. the soldiers did pretty much as they pleased. Many missions were completely gutted and no regard was paid for books, papers, reports, manuscripts, or documents of any kind. Instances are reported where valuable documents were used for gun wads and cigarette papers. In view of these facts it is surprising that even the few papers we possess at the present day should have been saved from the general ruin."

The mission priests were men of education while the average Californian of that time possessed little or no book learning and left practically no written records behind him. It seems a pity, then, that so many of these priceless records,



meticulously kept at the local missions, of the earliest rural land use of California by civilized men, should have been forever lost.

The fruits which form the basis of California rural prosperity of the present time were invariably introduced and propagated by the Franciscan friars, although the memory of their start within the walls of a mission garden is preserved in the names of only a few varieties such as the Mission Grape, the Mission Fig, and the Mission Olive.

### Interior Valley Region

Before control of the California province was wrested from Spain by the Mexican colonists, some little knowledge had been gained of the great Interior Valley Region. The industrious Pedro Fages was probably the first white man to visit that region when he traversed the southern portion in 1775. Gabriel Moraga, Indian fighter and explorer, made over forty trips through the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys between 1802 and 1823. This Spanish soldier travelled as far north as the Feather River and explored several of the leading streams well toward their sources. Although his written reports to the Spanish authorities were rather casual and brief, as mementos of his ramblings he left such names as San Joaquin, Mariposa, Merced and Sacramento.

Except for the trapping activities of Jedediah Smith and his successors, little use of California's immense 100-million acre land area outside the southern and central coast regions had been made up to the third decade of the 19th century. All urban development and rural use up to that time had been confined to this relatively small part of the State's area.

### Mexican Misrule and American Colonists

The political pot of California, represented by official Monterey and the other presidial towns where military and civil officials were located, was kept constantly boiling. Besides the constant friction between the secular authorities and the missions, plots, and intrigues, mostly in connection with land grants and land ownership, marked the stormy progress of Mexican rule. Governors were relieved of their office sometimes before they had scarcely assumed the duties of the position. There was continual friction between the North and the South and at times these different areas recognized different governors. Transportation facilities between the Mexican mother country and the northern colony were extremely poor.





Official Mexico's indifference and neglect was even more marked than that of Spain's had been, and had the effect of breeding a spirit of independence in the rural communities of Mexico's northern empire. There is little doubt that Mexico's misrule of California actually paved the way for American conquest. Even the military forces in California were allowed to fall into a state of decay. It is said that at one time in 1842 the entire garrison of the presidio of San Francisco consisted of one officer and one barefoot private.

The Boston clipper ships had noised abroad the fame of California's wonderful soil and climate and during the late 1830's and early 1840's more and more American settlers became naturalized Mexican landowners, and permeated the colony with a more aggressive type of land development. Most of the best lands of the coastal area had by this time been taken up and settlement began turning inland. The first land grant in the great interior region was made to a Mexican, Jose Noreigo, in 1836. This covered 17,712 acres at the foot of Mt. Diablo. A total of thirty Mexican grants were made in this region between 1836 and 1842.

#### John A. Sutter and Associates

Nearly all contemporary historians agree that John A. Sutter was the greatest Californian of his time. Certainly, he was the leading farmer, and for a time the greatest landowner, during the California pastoral era. His principal business was the raising of wheat and corn and the breeding of cattle, horses and sheep. However, he was at the same time miller, sawmill operator, engineer, and rural statesman as well as supreme ruler of a virtual empire of land in the Sacramento Valley, centering around the present day capitol of the State. Sutter's love of the land was expressed in all his dealings and activities.

His imagination fired with stories of the great, little known land on the Pacific Coast, Sutter left his home and family in Switzerland and emigrated to the United States. After many travel difficulties and delays had taken him half way around the world, Sutter reached California in 1839. Possessed of some capital, he persuaded Governor Alvarado to let him have a grant of land near the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers. Sutter never had thought or design of advancing the interests of any foreign country. Imbued with the ideals of American freedom with its promise of reward for individual effort, his solo ambition was to build a land empire of his own. This trait, coupled with the fact that the Mexican authorities were anxious to use any means at hand for the development of the great interior region and the holding in check



of the aboriginal inhabitants of that section, had perhaps a good deal to do with the large land grants given Sutter. At one time he was the owner under Mexican laws of 480,000 acres of land.

Landing at his new home on August 13, 1839 with a considerable party of followers, Sutter, naming the place New Helvetia, took possession of his land holdings with some formality and incidentally at the same time founded the city of Sacramento. Sutter so won the confidence of the Mexican authorities that he was later authorized by Governor Manuel Micheltorena to make formal grants of land to incoming Americans. Although Sutter made these grants in good faith and in full conformity with the Mexican laws of the time, they were later declared invalid by United States authorities.

Exercising a considerable restraint on the surrounding Indians and even winning their friendship and loyalty, he used their serviced in the large farming operations which he soon got under way. Sutter's New Helvetia, (Sutter's Fort) became the industrial as well as the main agricultural center of Central California in somewhat the same manner as had the larger missions in the California province at an earlier time.

Building his headquarters town and fort, fighting the Indians when necessary, carrying on a trade with the Russians with whom he was on particularly friendly terms, Sutter also vigorously prosecuted farming operations as his first and foremost activity. His livestock greatly increased and not only did he sell considerable dried beef, transported by his own boat to the San Francisco pueblo, but engaged in the same hide and tallow trade as the rancheros to the west and south. Sutter's records indicate that in 1844 his steers averaged two hundred pounds of meat to each animal, two arrobas of tallow and that his cattle hides sold for \$2.00 each at tidewater. He planted large areas of grain and on December 4, 1845, his diary shows that as one of his transactions he shipped 292 fanegas of wheat to the Russians at Fort Ross.

Sutter carried on his farming with any means at hand and visitors to Sutter's Fort in the 1840's mention the crude agricultural implements used by his Indian harvesters which were made in Sutter's own blacksmith shop. Scythes were as heavy as plow colters, it was said, and sickles and butcher knives were used to harvest the standing grain. Some of the Indian reapers, lacking these crude tools, pulled the stalks of grain from the ground by hand.





Sutter used the Mexican-California method of threshing grain in which vaqueros drove remudas of wild mares over the enclosed "eras", or threshing floors, to stamp out the grain. To stir up the straw for cleaner threshing, the vaqueros turned the horse herd suddenly in the opposite direction, the animal's feet sliding in the loose straw and having the effect of turning it over -- just another trick of the mounted vaquero who would never perform any manual labor if the means to the end could be accomplished in some manner from the back of a horse.

The fame of Sutter's inland empire spread. Gaining a reputation as a fair and impartial master, he had no difficulty in securing white farm labor, in addition to his Indian farm hands. Constantly building and developing, vaqueros and artisans coming to New Helvetia were usually hired by Sutter on the spot. Vaqueros in his employ were paid as much as two dollars a day and board, a high wage figure for this class of labor at that time. By 1845 Sutter's Fort was a considerable town in itself, embracing offices, living quarters, a general store, a wagon shop, blacksmith shop and other such utilities. A regular trade was carried on with the Indians, who brought in deerskins and furs. The establishment included a tannery, boots and other leather articles being manufactured for home use. With a distributing point in San Francisco, Sutter carried on a flourishing business for years catching, drying and shipping Sacramento River fish.

Sutter's nearest American neighbor was the Harvard-educated John Marsh, who had purchased the Jose Noriega Rancho of 17,000 acres in 1838 for the sum of \$500.00. Reputedly a graduate physician, and the first white man to practice medicine in the Great Valley area, he was somewhat of a misanthrope, his life having been soured in early youth by the death of his Mid-western half-breed Sioux wife. Marsh, who lived much alone with his Indians and his books, was grasping and penurious, but his great passion, nevertheless, was farming and land development, with an unlimited faith in the future of California lands.

"Doctor" Marsh, as he was known to his Mexican and American fellow colonists, was one of California's earliest land boosters. In 1841 he sent out a considerable number of letters to the "States" urging American settlers to come in, intimating eventual American occupation. In these letters he emphasized the fact that ownership of California was "not to be determined by diplomats or explorers, but by settlers in actual possession of the soil", -- in other words, "squatters". Becoming immensely wealthy, he was finally murdered by Mexican neighbors whom he was reputed to have cheated in business deals.



Peter Lassen, blazer of the Lassen Trail, who came to California in 1839, was located on his Mexican land grant on Deer Creek, to the far north, in present Tehama county. Theodor Cordua, an educated German and protege of Sutter, was located on a ten-league grant to the north in what is now Sutter county. Cordua, who was a good farmer, wrote in after years that there were some six or seven thousand Indians living on his forty-thousand-odd acre ranch and that under the Mexican land laws of the time they were considered his subjects, to be used or dealt with according to his personal needs or desires.

John Bidwell, close friend of Sutter, lived also well to the north on his grant, the Rancho Arroyo Chico. Major Pierson B. Reading was another northern neighbor as distances classified them in that sparsely settled country. Other American land-owners of Sutter's time in the northern part of the State and whose names are identified with the brief struggle which resulted in American conquest, were Wm. G. Chard, Samuel Neal, David Dutton, Wm. Moore, Ezekiel Merritt, John Francis Dye, and William B. Ide.

Among these American settlers John A. Sutter was regarded as the leader, as he continued to prosper in agricultural wealth. Late in 1845, probably suspecting his leanings toward American ownership of California and realizing his influence as a leader, Mexican authorities offered Sutter one hundred thousand dollars, with gilt edge security, for his New Helvetia holdings, an unprecedented sum of money for that time. Sutter refused. A little later they offered him this same amount plus the entire holdings of land and livestock yet a part of the unliquidated assets of Mission San Jose. John Sutter's business was the acquisition and development of land, not profit by its sale, and he again refused. He managed, however, to keep on good terms with the Mexican officials, although in complete sympathy with the aims of American colonists moving slowly towards aggressive action.

Earlier that same year Captain Sutter, leading his own company, had participated in the somewhat comic opera civil war culminated by the battle of Cahuenga Pass in which the casualties on both sides was one horse killed and one mule wounded. In this historic battle, fought near Los Angeles on February 20 and 21, 1845 with a great deal of spectacular musketry and cannonading, Micheltorena, Sutter's friend, was forced to surrender to the forces of Pio Pico. Pico afterwards entered upon a second term of duty as governor of California. He was the last Mexican gubernatorial executive. It is recorded that John Marsh, forced to serve grudgingly as a private in the





ranks of Micheltorena's forces, had considerable to do with Micheltorena's defeat. His subversive work might be termed one of the earliest fifth column activities.

As an illustration of the prosperity of the livestock business of the 1840's, Theodor Cordua has left a written record of his operations at his ten-league rancho at the confluence of the Yuba and Feather Rivers. Starting in 1841 with little more than the legal requirement of 150 head of cattle and a few horses, Cordua's ownership in 1843 is given by him at 820 cows with 100 calves, 20 tame milch cows, 100 bulls, 80 oxen, 200 horses, (50 of them tame) and "120 chickens from five hens and one rooster." In his minute, detailed way Cordua gave the prevailing California prices in the barter trade of the time. He listed dried hides at \$2 each, tallow at \$1.50 per arroba, soap at twelve and one-half cents per pound, with a price on dried beef of two cents per pound. This Sacramento Valley pioneer who sold out and left California at an early date, built a trading post on his property in 1842 for the convenience of emigrants coming south from Oregon along the Lassen trail.

### American Conquest

During the middle 1840's events moved rapidly toward American conquest of California. American negotiations for purchase failing of accomplishment, the inevitable war between the United States and Mexico broke out with a formal declaration by Congress on May 13, 1846. On July 10 of the previous year the Mexican Government had forbidden further immigration of Americans to California, although the local rural Mexican population was disposed to be friendly. There was still plenty of land to spare for all, and American settlers were better and closer neighbors than the distant authorities in Mexico.

On March 6, 1846 John C. Fremont, regular army officer in California on an ostensible scientific mission, raised the American flag near Monterey, but three days later retired to the sanctuary of Sutter's Fort. American settlers, already organizing a conquest of their own regardless of any international action which might be taken, flocked to Fremont's standard. Although Colonel Stephen W. Kearney was the officially appointed leader of the American land forces in California, Fremont, already on the ground, took over command of the settlers' army led by William B. Ide. This is the force which had staged the Bear Flag revolt and raised its banner over Sonoma on June 14, 1846. On July 7, Commodore John D. Sloat unfurled the American flag over the capitol at Monterey and officially proclaimed the California province a territory of the United States.



Meanwhile, battles between American and Mexican forces were taking place in Southern California. Fremont, in the last part of 1846, with 300 men, staged a spectacular march south, joining the hardpressed Americans there. Soldiers under the command of Colonel Kearney and marines from the force of Commodore Robert F. Stockton, the new Pacific naval commander, converged on San Diego and later joined up with Fremont's forces at Los Angeles. Although the Americans suffered several defeats in Southern California, they came off victorious in the final battle near Los Angeles and by the articles of capitulation, signed on January 13, 1847, the State of California became forever an American possession.

It is interesting to note in reading the history of this California campaign of 1846 that the Mexican-Californian rancheros serving in the ranks of the Mexican forces, were mainly responsible for the winning of the Mexican victories, solely by virtue of their superb horsemanship and skill with their time-honored weapon, the rawhide riata.

In January, 1847, the Mexican War was over so far as California was concerned, and after the fighting ceased, life on the ranchos continued in much the same manner as before. Security for the cattle barons seemed an established fact in view of Commodore Sloat's official proclamation of July 7, 1846. In taking formal possession of California in the name of the United States his proclamation declared that property rights, liberty, and religious freedom was guaranteed to all Californios. This proclamation, formally published in English and Spanish asserted that, "All persons holding titles or in quiet possession under color of right, shall have their titles and lands guaranteed under the United States flag." The Treaty of Guadalupe, dated February 2, 1848, confirming possession of California by the United States of America, also confirmed the fact that all land titles within the province such as were legitimate under Mexican rule prior to May 13, 1846, would be recognized, declaring that "their property shall be inviolably protected and insured." Yet, in later years, the validity of every land grant made under Spanish or Mexican laws was challenged.

#### New American-California

According to the best estimates, at the close of the campaign of 1846-47 in California, the entire white population of the province, exclusive of active, professional soldiers, was less than 9,000. Of these, not more than 1,000 were Americans, including those who had been naturalized under Mexican laws. There were not over a couple of hundred other foreigners in





the province, British, French, Germans, Italians, and South Americans. The balance, outside of those living in the few presidial towns and pueblos, were rural residents, living on the cattle ranchos or on the reduced mission lands. These stockmen, controlling around twelve million acres of land granted them under Spanish and Mexican laws, were the owners of approximately 250,000 head of cattle and 25,000 head of horses and mules.

Sheep, the numbers of which had reached a comparatively high figure during the best days of the missions, had gone down to less than 20,000 head. Again, the comparatively small volume of manual labor on foot needed to handle cattle manifested itself in the life of the Californios. Outside of a few dirt farmers such as John Sutter, and the small farmers of the pueblos, little attention was paid to the production of field crops or fruits.

Many rancheros had their "haciendas", or orchard and garden areas, such as General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, a prominent figure in early California history. Vallejo, Mexican-Californio to the core, but afterwards a staunch friend of the new regime, had, in addition to land almost without limit, 15,000 head of cattle, 7,000 horses and about 5,000 of the few remaining sheep in the province.

It seems somewhat strange that John A. Sutter, who contributed so largely to the American conquest, successful farmer and business executive as he was, should have been almost as trusting in the integrity and good faith of others as were his simple Mexican ranchero neighbors. After the conquest, his bounty to the incoming American settlers continued and his agricultural production kept increasing. His detailed diary entries indicate the completion of harvesting 102 fanegas of peas on July 5, 1847 and the threshing of approximately 14,000 fanegas (23,300 bushels) of wheat, between July and December of the same year. The following is part of a letter written by Sutter to his brother in Switzerland during the closing hours of the year 1847:

"Sutter's Fort may live in history - The Lord has prospered me in this new country and I now possess great herds the measure by which a man's wealth is determined here.. I can see your eyes grow large and you question who there is in this new land to care for the milk and make the cheese of such large herds. But it is not with us as it is with you in the Alps. Our cattle are raised for the hides and tallow and we scarcely know the taste of butter."



## Gold Discovery

Meanwhile locked in the ground of the beautiful little valley of Coloma lay the secret which was to disturb the peaceful security and spell the agricultural ruin of this Swiss-Californian farmer, change the course of California history, and stir the entire civilized world to its very depths. Three weeks after Sutter had written to his brother of his prosperity in the new world, James W. Marshall picked up flakes of gold along the South Fork of the American River, in the tail race of a sawmill he was constructing for Sutter, in this little valley of the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Judged by his subsequent actions, Sutter possibly had some premonition of what Marshall's discovery portended. Proceeding to the sawmill site as soon as weather conditions permitted, on February 2, 1848 he himself picked up pieces of gold along the river's meandering course through the valley, substantiating the importance of Marshall's find.

With his customary direct action, Sutter immediately gathered together all of the 69 Indians resident in Coloma Valley and drew up a three-year lease to all mineral rights. This lease was signed with the mark of all the adult Indians, who were reimbursed by Sutter with calico, shirts, and other merchandise. Sutter also pledged all those around him to secrecy regarding the new discovery in a fruitless attempt to stem the tide of goldseekers which his foresight told him would follow.

The easy-going manner of living of the Mexican cattle barons, mixed with the more aggressive large scale land use activities of John A. Sutter and pioneers of similar ilk, was to be invaded by gold-hungry thousands practicing a form of land use little known up to that time in any part of the world.





## CHAPTER VI GOLD RUSH DAYS - 1848-1855

### Gold Unlimited

The Gold Rush to California has probably no parallel in human history. As the news of Marshall's discovery spread through the nation it was extolled in the public press, preached from the pulpit, passed from mouth to mouth and permeated the daily life of every hamlet in America. The gold fever passed beyond international boundaries and spread to the four corners of the earth. Already much vaunted as a land of natural riches, romance, color, beauty, and unequalled climate, it was as though Nature, herself, had of a sudden conspicuously displayed her golden wares to lure settlers to California's fertile lands.

Preachers and farmers, lawyers, and artisans, bankers, adventurers, gamblers, and thieves, men of every social strata, of every race and every creed, joined in the rush to the new land where riches could be scooped from the earth with a pocket knife and kitchen spoon. It is safe to say that for every American who actually deserted his usual occupation to join the ranks of the Argonauts, there were fifty others who dreamed and planned of the day when they too would follow the golden trail. The name, "California", was on every lip and even the songs of the day epitomized the public attitude toward the newly-acquired lands of the West. Lilted, doggerel tunes such as the following were not only prevalent in the United States of America, but throughout the English-speaking world:

Oh, the Good Time has come at last,  
We need no more complain, Sir  
The rich can live in luxury  
And the poor can do the same, Sir.  
For the Good Time has come at last,  
And as we all are told, Sir,  
We shall be rich at once now,  
With California Gold, Sir.

Rumors such as that of the native Californians living to be 250 years old were swallowed by fairly intelligent people, and during the height of the gold craze no story of that wonderful land of California was too ridiculous to be recounted, and often believed.

The golden streaks of the California hills had set the whole world to dancing; the fabled El Dorado of the Spanish conquistadores had become an actual reality.



People by the thousands braved the dangers of the overland trails or the often hazardous journey by ship via the Panama, or around Cape Horn. Groups in the Eastern States raked together money to finance the costly trip of one or more agents to bring back to them a supply of the plentiful gold. By January, 1849 five companies, with California gold mining as their objective, were formed in London alone, with a total capitalization of over a million and a quarter English pounds. Every European port that year had a ship outfitting for the newly-discovered gold fields. In 1848 a large number of the new settlers of Oregon deserted their agricultural lands and emigrated south to take part in the new mining venture.

Samuel Brannan, Mormon elder, merchant and newspaper editor, in late May, 1848 brought from Sutter's Fort to San Francisco the news of the great discovery. San Francisco, already developing into a metropolitan center, in a brief time was a deserted village, along with the capitol city of Monterey to the south. Sailors deserted their ships, soldiers their post of duty and detachments sent out to capture them failed to return, having also joined the gold rush. The business houses of the new American province locked their doors, as their entire personnel headed up the Sacramento for the "gold diggin's". Even the prisoners from the local San Francisco jail joined their guards in the mad scramble.

Elder Brannan spread the news throughout the nation when he reported in mid-July of 1848 that 3,000 men working in the gold fields had harvested \$600,000 to date, and that he himself on a few days' inspection tour had picked up an average of \$1000 worth of gold a day by only casual work with a pick, shovel and plain tin pan.

By the end of 1848 there were between five and eight thousand men working in the gold fields, stretching along the Sierra foothills from the Feather to the Stanislaus Rivers. Major P. B. Reading, employing Indian labor, was also reaping a rich harvest far to the north on the Trinity. On December 5, 1848 President Polk officially announced to Congress the discovery of gold in California, intensifying the frenzied interest in this new part of the United States of America. Although the main gold rush did not occur till later, the population of California that year jumped to around 25,000.

More gold was taken out per capita in 1848 than during any other year. Some of the actual happenings reported in the thousands of volumes of California history covering that time sound fantastic. In the Yuba Diggings miners made \$60. to





\$100 per day, using the crudest of hand tools. The rich dry diggings at what is now Placerville (The "Hangtown" of early mining days) yielded from five ounces to five pounds of gold to each man during that first golden summer. Indians, hired by miners on Weber Creek, in return for cheap trinkets and ornaments, each turned over to their white employers as high as \$200. per day in gold picked from the rocks of the stream bed with their knives.

John Sinclair secured fourteen pounds of gold in six weeks from the north and middle forks of the American River. Eight miners in the same locality washed out fifty dollars a day each for a lengthy period. Some men who packed loads of pay dirt on their backs to the nearest stream for washing, realized as high as \$800 to \$1500 worth of gold in a single day as their individual share. Single pockets in creek beds yielded nuggets and gold flakes to a value of ten, fifteen and even twenty thousand dollars.

Geologists could not account sometimes for the peculiar natural caches of gold found. A Mexican miner named Valdez found more gold dust deposited under a single rock than he could carry away in a towel. With this fortune in his hands he decided to return to his home in Santa Barbara and sold the claim. The purchaser took out fifty-two pounds of yellow gold in eight days.

During this first gold mining year of 1848 it is estimated that ten million dollars in gold was harvested in the form of nuggets, flakes and gold dust. Gold was so easily obtained that although the standard price was eighteen dollars an ounce it was sometimes sold for as low as five dollars. Pure, raw gold became the legal tender of the time in California.

Since only surface mining was practiced at the beginning just the crudest of hand tools, the pick, shovel, knife, washing pan and rude wooden cradle were used. A California visitor of 1848, referring to the mining operations, wrote an Eastern newspaper, "At present the people are running over the country and picking it (gold) out of the earth here and there, just as 1,000 hogs let loose in a forest would root up ground nuts."

### The Great Rush

The bulk of the first miners was drawn from the Pacific Coast area and there was little of the crime and lawlessness which followed in later years. The miners left bags of gold in their tents, safe even from the prowling Indians, whose hostility was being roused by this mass invasion of their tribal lands.



Prices soared. Flour sold in the mining areas for \$800 per barrel; a team and wagon used to haul pay dirt rented for \$50 a day; hay was fifteen cents a pound; eggs were priced at three dollars each. To give themselves more time for gold washing, groups of miners hired cooks and this class of labor drew down as high as \$150 per day. A storekeeper's bill of December, 1848 preserved among museum relics, reads as follows: "1 box Sardines, \$16.00; 1# Butter, \$6.00; 1# Hard Bread, \$2.00,  $\frac{1}{2}$ # Cheese, \$3.00; 2 bottles Ale, \$16.00; Total \$43.00." Evidently this bill covered a wayside lunch enjoyed by a couple of gold diggers.

The year of 1849 marked the central period of gold rush days. Twenty thousand California gold-seekers were camped at Independence, Missouri on May 1, 1849, waiting for settled weather conditions to start their long overland journey. A few weeks later, well along the Western trail, a traveller on horseback counted 459 slow-moving wagons within a nine-mile stretch.

A large number of the Argonauts died from hardship on the trail en route. Cholera and other diseases took a heavy toll of the gold-seekers. Many of them arrived in California utterly destitute. Funds were appropriated by public agencies for the relief of suffering on the overland trail. Little trouble with Indians, however, was encountered by these early gold rush emigrants.

The more affluent sold-seekers came by ship via Panama or around the Horn, outrageous prices being charged for passage on the overcrowded vessels. Records indicate that 529 such ships arrived at San Francisco harbor during a nine-months period in 1849, many of them bearing passengers from foreign countries. The rush continued during 1850, and the official census of that year set the population of California at 92, 497.

Lest we think that only the third and fourth decades of the Twentieth century had a monopoly on the idea, at least, of transcontinental aerial transportation, let it be said that a man named Rufus Porter planned and widely advertised an aerial route from New York to California in 1849. The ballons to be used to transport Argonauts to the gold fields of California would require two days to make the trip if winds were favorable and five days if they were not. The advertised fare was extremely reasonable -- \$100 -- including board and return passage. Evidently even the courageous Forty-niners did not care to risk their skins in this mode of travel, since they left the conquest of the air to future generations.

Meanwhile, the thirty-first star added to the American flag marked the admission of California to the Union on November 13, 1849.





Abel Stearns from the south and John Sutter from the north, with 46 other delegates, meeting at Monterey on September 13, 1849, constituted the first California State legislative assembly. Drawing up a State constitution, this body also defined the geographical boundaries of California, practically the same as they exist at the present time. It is interesting to note that six of the forty-eight of these original legislators were native Californios, and that the personnel of the assembly consisted of 12 rancheros, 14 lawyers, and merchants, the balance being drawn from other professions.

John A. Sutter was urged to accept the nomination as candidate for governor and had he done so would undoubtedly have been elected. Wedded to his farm lands in the great valley, Sutter refused the nomination, but his name was placed on the ballot anyway. Peter H. Burnett was elected and became California's first governor under American rule.

### Sutter's Ruin

In 1848 Sutter's wheat crop was estimated at 40,000 bushels. As a side issue from his farming operations he engaged with 50 Indians in gold mining at Mormon Island on the American River, but his heart was not in this venture and he made little profit therefrom. He continued his open-handed hospitality to the first gold-seekers who overran his lands seeking pay dirt. These first comers were mostly local people, and his own kind. During 1849 some 42,000 of a different class came to New Helvetia. A large percentage of these became indebted to Sutter for food and supplies furnished, but few paid. On the other hand, all sorts of fake debts were charged against him and if there was any shadow of an obligation involved Sutter paid them.

The miners robbed Sutter right and left, killing his cattle for food and paying no attention to his property rights. On May 5, 1849 he advertised in the Placerville Times, warning against squatters on his lands and giving a description thereof in detail. This had no effect on the trespassers. One group of organized cattle thieves actually declared dividends of some \$60,000 derived from the sale of Sutter's cattle, which they had killed and slaughtered. Even settlers of the better type, who were squatters on his farm lands, joined an organization formed in 1850 for the express purpose of nullifying Sutter's land claims, although this organization also included in its membership land grabbers, murderers and thieves of the worst sort.



The land surrounding Sutter's Fort blossomed into the town of Sacramento, to become the permanent State capitol in 1852. It was the jumping off place for miners en route to the gold fields in the nearby Mother Lode region and quickly became, next to San Francisco, the most important industrial center in the State. Stores, warehouses, boarding houses, wharves and other structures appeared in Sutter's wheat fields along the river front. Land values boomed and had Sutter exercised the same business intelligence in land disposal as he did in its acquisition, he would have become immensely wealthy. Rural land ownership, however, was his great obsession and he proved a poor urban real estate operator, his business deals involving him still more heavily in debt.

In the summer of 1849 Peter Burnett, on a commission basis, undertook to help the Swiss empire builder straighten out his tangled finances. The price of building lots in the new city continued to rise, -- \$250 to \$500 on up to one thousand, two thousand and even three thousand dollars each. Burnett once stated that before assuming State governorship, he was able from the sale of these parcels of real estate to raise sufficient funds to enable Sutter to pay all his legal debts.

Sutter, with a few faithful Indian retainers continued farming operations on a fairly large scale, but his war with the squatters on his land grants continued for many years. The final blow came when in 1865 squatters fired his home in the dead of night, Sutter and his wife barely escaping with their lives. His deeds and title papers were all destroyed.

In later years John Sutter stated that he had spent \$325,000 on land controversies. Besides the heavy losses of personal property, he was the victim of unprincipled promoters and land sharks. It is said that a man named Peachy made \$80,000 while handling Sutter's business affairs for a short time and historians mention the fact that General A. Winn swindled the Swiss farmer of of \$35,000. Both the U. S. Land Commission and the California courts affirmed the validity of Sutter's Mexican land grants, but the United States Supreme Court reversed these decisions, legalizing his title only to the New Helvetia grant and denying his right to the larger Sobrante grant. One of the jurists serving on the case gave as his argument against approving Sutter's claims in full, "that it is contrary to public policy for one man to hold so much land."

Under Sutter's code of ethics, he felt compelled to make good the loss occasioned early American settlers to whom he had made land grants under the power conferred upon him by the Mexican authorities. The large sums he received, therefore,





for the lands of New Helvetia were expended in reimbursing others who had suffered financially by his own acts. Sutter died in 1880 a poor man. Regardless of the rather poor showing made by Sutter when the great gold rush disrupted his plans of empire building, no one can deny the fact of his being a good farmer and one of California's earliest land builders. Without political aspirations, his great ambition was only along the lines of land ownership and land development and his love of the California land never wavered during his long, troubled life.

John Sutter was generous to a fault. He fed and clothed all comers and rarely turned a deaf ear to any appeal for aid, financial or otherwise. John C. Fremont, Kit Carson and other famous explorers received almost unlimited hospitality and assistance from the hands of Sutter. For a large part of the volume of supplies he furnished for the official development of California he received no compensation whatever. His headquarters was the recognized stopping place for all who traveled through the region and it was he who furnished the chief succor for the ill-fated Donner party in 1846. As a tribute to the man who was California's first great pioneer farmer, the following are the words of Elizabeth Donner, one of the few survivors of that tragic emigrant train, written at the time of Sutter's death many years later:

"As long as California has a human history the memory of General Sutter will warm the hearts of her people. It was he who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, comforted the distressed children of California's pioneer days. Surely his name glows eternally in vivid letters of sunlight on Sierra mountain crests; and no man can fail to see it etched in the sunset glory of the Golden Gate."

#### New Cattle Values

Comparatively few of the ranchero population engaged actively in gold mining operations and statisticians of that time estimate that there were never more than 1,300 Mexican-Californians in the mining belt during the hectic gold rush days. As a matter of fact, previous gold discoveries had been made in California without in any way disturbing the tenor of existence on the ranchos. While James Marshall is hailed as the original discoverer of gold in California and the particular gold particles which he picked up early in January of 1848 actually precipitated the great Gold Rush, a Mexican working for John Bidwell had discovered gold at Bidwell's Bar on the Feather



River in 1844. Bidwell pledged the man to secrecy and the news did not come out till four years later, when Bidwell's Bar became one of California's earliest and most famous mining camps.

Gold was discovered at a still earlier date in Southern California when in 1841 it was found in paying quantities eight miles west of the present town of Newhall. Mention of small export shipments of gold from time to time are found in the old Mexican records and the mission padres were aware of its existence because of small quantities brought to them from time to time by Indians.

The great gold rush, however, ushered in a golden tide of prosperity for the cattle barons of California, more dependable than that accruing to the miners themselves. The hide and tallow trade was soon a thing of the past, as the ever-increasing demands of the mining communities shot prices of the rancho products skyward. Dried beef, a drug on the market at two cents a pound, in 1849 jumped to a price of twenty cents a pound in the San Francisco retail market. The need of the newly-created market for tallow to manufacture the universally-used candles of that time was almost insatiable and the rancho who had formerly sold this staple product for four cents a pound could now command thirty cents. No longer was it necessary to leave the main part of a slaughtered animal to rot on the matanza ground. The entire animal, with a former rated value of \$4 to \$6, at first rising to a figure of \$200 or more, was within a short time stabilized to a minimum price of \$25 on the hoof delivered.

In the first sales of beef to these new markets, the rancheros seemed to have followed their old custom of slaughtering and shipping the cured meat, hides and tallow by ocean vessels from different points in the south to the Central Coast Region, for distribution through the mining sections. This method of marketing was quickly supplanted by the driving of herds all the way from the ranchos of the far south either along the coast or through the thinly settled Great Valley.

There are but sparse records of these early day cattle drives, but the old cattle trails of California were quite comparable in use to the later day Abilene Trail, over which the vast herds of Texas longhorns were driven to the national livestock markets in Kansas.

Although some of the California cattle herds reached proportions of 2,000 head or more, the average number in each was seven or eight hundred. Poisonous plants, feed shortage, loss





by stampeding and later on from cattle thieves, all took their toll of these trail herds. Some of the ranchero-drovers leased pasture lands close to the San Francisco Bay area, where trail-weary cattle could be recuperated and fattened for market. These leases were usually paid for by cattle from the herds.

With hitherto undreamed of wealth at their command, the California rancheros lived an even more glamorous existence than before. Their pleasures were still those of the olden days and with a greatly increased income, their love of color manifested itself in hectic buying, a large part of their expenditures being made for rich ornaments and expensive dresses for their women folks, and glittering trappings for their horses. Silk and velvet dresstuffs brought around the Horn and sold at exorbitant prices, jewelry, pictures, elaborate house furnishings, ornate silver spurs and silver mounted saddles and bridles, ate up the money flowing into the coffers of the big landowners. It is said that familiar sights on the streets of the pueblo of Los Angeles in those days were superbly mounted riders glorying in rich clothes and riding equipment running up into an individual cost of thousands of dollars.

The rancheros, in their happy-go-lucky, easy-going way of life, evidently did not realize that trail herds of Texas longhorns, or droves of superior bred cattle from the Middle West, would soon drive their rangy, half-wild, black cattle back to the bottom of the price scale, and eventually from the range itself. The Los Angeles Star, in 1852, stated that 90,000 loose cattle and almost 25,000 sheep had passed Fort Kearney en route to California in the spring and summer of that year. The following year Governor Bigler reported that in addition to thousands of cattle from Texas, a total of 62,000 came into the State over emigrant trails. The native Californian black cattle were pretty well out of the picture within ten years after the first days of the Gold Rush.

All over the State, organized bands of thieves not only took a heavy toll of cattle from the ranchos and trail herds, but also robbed the miners of their gold dust and the stages of their loads of the precious metal. Incoming miners and settlers did not usually understand nor greatly care for the customs of the Mexican-Californians with their swaggering, easy-going way of life, and contemptuously referred to the natives generally as "Greasers." The treatment accorded these native Californios of the lower classes undoubtedly had a lot to do with the criminal element which developed among them. Taken as a whole, however, there was a much larger proportionate number of hard characters among the riff-raff from out of the State which accompanied the honest miners to the gold fields.



Crime was rampant in California during the gold rush days. The story of the Vigilantes and miners' courts, who, taking the law into their own hands and meting out rough and ready justice, did much to stop the crime wave, is a favorite theme with most California historians. Records of the time indicate that 4,200 people were murdered in Central California alone, many of them over struggles for land control, during the five-year period of 1849-54. Records also disclose the fact that 1,400 despondent and disappointed gold miners committed suicide during the same period.

Even before the gold rush days had enhanced the value of cattle, Southern California suffered heavy losses of livestock by Indian raiders from the lower San Joaquin Valley and from neighboring Arizona. With rise in cattle prices, local vaqueros also took to this easy life of crime. Probably the most famous bandit-robber of those days was Joaquin Murrieta, whose depredations covered nearly all of the settled portions of the State at that time. The unjust murder of his brother and the rape of his sweetheart by brutal, lawless Americans, turned this Mexican vaquero into an implacable, American-hating, cold-blooded murderer and thief.

Operating as the leader of a gang of twenty to seventy cut-throats, he ranged the country, stealing gold and livestock indiscriminately, and murdering for the pure love of killing. His apparently charmed existence was brought to an end in 1853 by the bullets of Federal officers.

In spite of the hazards attending the livestock business in the 1850's, it continued to prosper, as is evidenced by the following figures based on Federal census reports, the State Register, and taken from other official sources.

#### LIVESTOCK IN CALIFORNIA

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CATTLE</u>	<u>HORSES</u>	<u>SHEEP</u>
1850	262,259	21,719	17,554
1852	448,796	67,773	82,867
1855	530,000	78,000	140,000
1856	694,000	106,991	253,312
1857	722,374	137,142	298,343
1858	814,642	160,804	417,409
1859	1,000,000	200,000	1,000,000

Fifty percent of these cattle were pastured in the southern counties, Monterey leading with 200,000 in 1859. The same year





San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles counties each had 100,000 head, the latter county being considered one of the leading cow counties of the State. Mutton was beginning to figure conspicuously in the diet of the gold fields and wool to a large extent replaced the former hide and tallow cargo in the holds of the Boston-bound ships. The number of sheep jumped in a decade from a few thousands to a million head, to rise in a few years to a much greater number and create a State-wide land use problem.

### Mining to Agriculture

After the first banner year of 1848, not one miner in fifty was successful in wresting riches from the land of California in the form of raw gold. A great many of them became nomads, joining rushes to new locations to chase some Will-of-the-Wisp based, perhaps, merely on a wild rumor of new gold discoveries.

Once in 1850, prospectors returned from the mouth of the Klamath River with reports that an immense sandy sea beach was apparently half gold. Christened "Gold Bluffs," this reported discovery precipitated a mad rush to the almost inaccessible region of its location. A large mining company was organized in San Francisco and an immense amount of its stock sold.

A contemporary writer, commenting on the new field, reported in the news columns of the time that, "Millions of gold diggers for ages to come could not exhaust that grand deposit." There was gold in those sands -- it probably is still there, but not in paying quantities. The bubble burst in a few months, but not before many hopeful gold seekers had lost their lives in an attempt to reach and harvest the wealth, and speculators had been mulcted out of many thousands of dollars.

Many gold miners became farmers and helped in the founding of the State's great agricultural prosperity, and those pioneers who turned to agricultural pursuits other than stock-raising reaped a rich harvest during the early mining days. One of the largest of these was John Marsh, whose ranch holdings north of Mt. Diablo had grown to 50,000 acres. Marsh netted a return of \$20,000 from grapes and cattle alone in 1849, and the same amount for several years thereafter. Grapes sold at his rancho for 87½ cents a pound and besides the volume of his fruit and grain crops, his livestock holdings had increased to 6,000 cattle and 500 hogs. His rancho also produced a considerable amount of dairy products. The bloated prices, plus the proximity of his rancho to reach markets, brought the immense fortune which had been Marsh's life-long ambition.



As settlers began spreading over the lands up and down the great interior valley area and in the south, the central and northern coastal sections planting fruit, vegetable and field crops, the great diversified agricultural possibilities of California, with its kind climate and fertile soil, more than ever proved itself. Many disappointed gold diggers found the prosperity in farming denied them in the mining region.

George McKinstry, Jr., former Sutter aide, writing in 1852 from San Diego to a friend in the East, extolled these wonderful agricultural possibilities by perhaps exaggeratedly citing cabbages weighing fifty-three pounds per head and Irish potatoes thirty-three inches in circumference.

William Taylor, American Methodist pioneer missionary, whose "California Life" was published in 1858, predicted in his book, "California is destined to become one of the greatest fruit growing countries of the world", and mentions Santa Clara Valley peach trees which bore fruit nine inches in diameter and weighed seven to eight ounces each, 28 months from the planting of the seed. Local Gloria Mundi apples made their appearance on the San Francisco markets in 1852 also. These apples were reputed to be fifteen inches in circumference each way and sold for a flat price of three dollars a piece.

Although the Reverend Wm. Taylor's chief aim in life was combatting vice in the mushroomed city of San Francisco, he was a real developer and builder, with a distinct analytical turn of mind and a flair for figures. Giving the land area of California as it exists at the present time, Taylor estimated that in 1852 gold mining operations had spread over twelve million acres. He naively stated that after deducting land used for agriculture and mining, "there is still left 10,841,280 acres for the accommodation of grizzly bears and mountain lions."

To this same early-day cleric-statistician we are indebted for an account of probably the only overproduction of agricultural crops in California during the Gold Rush period. As a means of producing bulk food quickly, a potato growing mania developed in the San Francisco area in the early 1850's. Vacant lots and fields were plowed up and people of all classes engaged in the venture. Fifteen cents per pound was paid for seed potatoes and the yield was so heavy that sacks containing them were worth more than the potatoes themselves. Shipping to a distance was out of the question, and the local market could not absorb the crop. Many thousands of tons rotted in the warehouses and the stench of rotting potatoes became somewhat of a municipal problem.





Taylor also mentions the fact that in 1852 thirty-two acres of barley in Alameda County average 134 bushels to the acre and that two and three crops were harvested from one sowing, the volunteer crops sometimes equalling the yield from the original planting.

Graduating almost overnight from a sleepy pueblo San Jose became a bustling center during the hectic gold mining days. The agricultural crops from the surrounding rich Santa Clara Valley lands found a ready market at unheard of prices. A single radish sold for 12 cents, a melon for one dollar, potatoes were 12 cents a pound at times, and the stage fare for the fifty-mile trip to San Francisco was two ounces of gold dust. The nearby Guadalupe Mines, already operating before Marshall's discovery of gold, in 1850 produced 7,723 flasks of quicksilver, an essential need in gold mining. By 1855 the output of quicksilver from these mines had increased to 33,000 flasks annually and later, in 1865, their yield had grown to 53,000 flasks.

#### Southern California Settlement

While further removed from the scene of the feverish gold mining operations, Southern California shared in the prosperity of the time. Although the influx of people was much slower, there was a steady gain in agricultural settlement during the State's earliest formative years. In 1851-52, some one hundred families from the frontier settlements of Texas moved on further west and founded the agricultural community around the present day town of El Monte.

Undoubtedly, the great Mormon leader, Brigham Young, envisioned establishing in Southern California a duplicate of his Salt Lake empire of Deseret. As early as 1848, Isaac Williams, pioneer landowner of that section, offered the Church of Latter Day Saints the Rancho Chico of eight square leagues, with 8,000 cattle and a considerable number of horses, for \$500 cash, the balance on the purchaser's own terms. Evidently nothing came of this offer other than scouts being sent out from Deseret to look over the virgin lands of Southern California. The Mormons ranked high as pioneer farmers and as proper settlers to develop new lands, so feelers continued to be sent back to their leaders at Salt Lake to induce emigration to the new state.

Brigham Young finally ordered two of his lieutenants, Amos A. Lyman and Chas. A. Rich, to lead a party of emigrants to Southern California. With characteristic thoroughness, these two officers of the Mormon sect led an emigrant train of 150



wagons, well equipped with livestock and farming implements, over the trail through Cajon Pass in 1851, to found the city of San Bernardino and the agricultural settlement surrounding it. A stockade fortress was built, and in spite of hardships and Indian troubles, the venture prospered greatly. It was abandoned in 1857 as an official project of the Church of Latter Day Saints, probably on account of the hostility engendered by the Mountain Meadows Massacre in Southern Utah. On orders from headquarters about one-half of the settlers returned to Salt Lake City, selling their land holdings and personal effects at sacrifice prices. The broad streets of the city of San Bernardino, a second Salt Lake City in lay-out and appearance, and the progressive development of the immensely rich agricultural area around it, are a tribute to these hardy Mormon pioneers.

### California of the Fifties

During the early days of gold production, before hydraulic mining and other devastating uses of the Sierra Nevada had washed countless tons of silt and debris down to choke the stream channels, the California rivers extending into the interior were a great boon in providing waterways, not only to the mining communities but to the growing agricultural settlements along their courses as well. The Sacramento was navigable as far north as Red Bluff, 246 miles from San Francisco; the Feather at one time as far as Marysville and occasionally to Oroville; the San Joaquin then, as now, was navigable to Stockton; the Merced River could be traversed by shallow draft vessels. A common saying in later years was that the old fashioned river steamers plying the Sacramento carried during their terms of service sufficient weight in gold to sink them several times over.

In 1850 California had 27 counties; six were created in 1851 and 1852 and seven added during the 1852-55 period, bringing the total up to forty. In 1850 Sacramento was credited with a population of 10,000. Before 1849, the new, raw city of San Francisco had grown to 6,000 people; by 1850 it had 12,000 permanent residents, to double and treble in numbers during the next few years.

In 1850, Marysville, Yuba City, and Stockton were becoming important industrial centers and some of the mining camps of the Sierra Nevada boasted a population of many thousands, many of them the present day ghost towns of the Mother Lode country. Humboldt City and Eureka in the North Coast Region, were laid out in this same year of 1850 and one thousand





miners were alternately digging gold and fighting pilfering Indians along the course of the Trinity River.

In 1851 the State was credited with 61 post offices and the number had grown to 114 in 1853. By 1852 the population of California was 224,435 people, the bulk of the number being miners, since at that time only seven percent of the entire population was women. By 1855 the population had reached 400,000. The increase in population was mainly in the Central and Northern Coastal Regions and the Interior Valley Region, since it was not until some three decades later that the great influx of people hit Southern California.

Newcomers to California were beginning to find out that even the "perfect" climate had its drawbacks, both for the dirt farmer and miner, and for the urban resident. The winter of 1849-50 was one of California's wettest, and floods were general all over the State. That winter was marked with fifty inches of precipitation in the new city of San Francisco and as much as 100 inches in normally wetter parts of the new commonwealth. It also brought a snowpack of over thirty feet in the High Sierra. The streets of San Francisco were quagmires and shipping crates, odds and ends of debris, useless patented gold washing machines, and even carcasses of spoiled beef, were thrown into the almost bottomless mud to provide stepping stones. Too much water, and too little -- then, as later, marked California's climate.

Their operations spread over eleven or twelve million acres of the State of California in their search for gold. Previous land ownership meant little to the early day miners. However, the lands of the gold region, both the Mother Lode section, which lay, roughly, between central Eldorado county and northern Mariposa county, and in other mountain sections of the State, were mostly public domain. A small part of the lands involved were located on grants made to American settlers of the Mexican regime, chief among them being those of John Sutter.

In cities such as Sacramento and San Francisco and in the mining towns and supply centers which sprang up overnight, real estate booms were the order of the day. Town lots brought in fancy figures. More quick fortunes were made, and often as quickly lost, in land speculation than were gained in actual production of the yellow metal itself. Often the men who dealt in the sale of lands in these budding communities had no more right to the title than those who sought them. Frequently, towns died aborning when some newly located gold diggings failed to come up to expectation.



Practically no gold was discovered on the lands controlled by the Mexican-Californians, a fact which simplified somewhat the complicated task of the United States Land Commission in their allocation of California lands. Although Colonel R. B. Mason, at that time military governor of California, as early as August of 1848 recommended special land use laws for the mining region, Congress failed to pass covering legislation.

Both the Federal and State governments pursued an attitude of "laissez faire", and the miners of each district made and enforced their own laws. Most of these laws, written and unwritten, followed the same general pattern, which was the American pioneer ideal of undisturbed possession by virtue of occupation and use. Use of land by squatter farmers followed virtually the same principle, as did land use by timber operators of the gold rush days. The gold seekers of that time were legally trespassers on public lands, but that their home made laws were American-like, equitable and just, is evidenced by the fact that later Federal mining laws applicable to California, adopted their provisions.

Naturally the great gold rush, immortalized in history as the "Days of Forty-Nine", centered the attention of the world on California, now an American Commonwealth with land use practices and customs individually its own. The greatest gold rush in history unquestionably speeded up California settlement and development by decades.







